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PALAZZO VECCHIO AND PIAZZA DELLA SIGNORIA

In this Palace Savonarola was imprisoned, and in the Square he was burned alive on May 23rd A.D. 1498.

THINGS SEEN IN FLORENCE

BY
E. GRIERSON
AUTHOR OF "THE STORY OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI,"
&c., &c., &c.

PROFUSELY ILLUSTRATED

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Things Seen in Florence

CHAPTER I

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

FLORENCE! La Città del Fiore! The City of Flowers! At the mere mention of its name visions rise in our minds of all that is beautiful in Art, and all that is quaint, and picturesque, and turbulent, in mediæval history.

Yet it is possible that, as we journey thither, and draw near the city, we may feel somewhat disappointed as the train enters a region of low, undulating hills, covered, in late summer and autumn at least, by a mantle of what might be mistaken for low, sad-coloured brushwood, but which is in reality a vast expanse of vineyards and oliveyards, which take their general note of colour from the dull greeny-grey of the olive-trees. The whole landscape is sadder, duller, tamer than we expected—"a study in grisaille," as someone has expressed it.

Plainly built farm-houses, oblong or square, with walls covered with cream-coloured plaster, rise here and there among the vineyards, and these buildings increase in size and number as the train circles round the shoulder of a hill, and we find ourselves looking out over a broad valley many miles in extent. This valley, although it is covered by the same grey mantle that we noticed before, is so studded with tiny clusters of houses and villas that we would take it to be a wide-spreading suburb of some city which has not yet come into view.

At a particular spot, the houses cluster closer together, running for a considerable way up the sides of two hills, studded with cypress-trees, which encroach on the valley at this point.

Where the houses stand thickest, cupolas, towers, and domes appear, and as the train begins to slow down, the sound of church bells rises above the rumble of the wheels.

"We have arrived," remarks an Italian countrywoman who has shared our compartment since we left Pisa, and who has been trying to enliven us by telling us how, after an exceedingly hot summer, "the water supplies are running short," and that rumours of cholera

are abroad—which statement, luckily for us, proves to be entirely false.

And, sure enough, before we have realized that we have been gazing for the last ten minutes on the Mecca of our dreams, the train rumbles into an ordinary, commonplace, badly lighted station, and we find ourselves at our journey's end.

But when once our luggage has been collected, and placed in a vehicle, and we are on our way to our hotel or pension, all latent feelings of disillusionment vanish. For we are carried at once into an enchanted city, the architecture of which is so varied and wonderful, the paintings and mosaics and little sculptured shrines which look down on us even from the outside of the buildings so strange and suggestive, the colouring so marvellous, and the memories that are called up so overwhelming, that we are tempted for the moment to wonder if there is any other town in Europe to compare with it.

Perhaps the first thing that strikes a stranger is the extraordinary variety and beauty of the colouring. This is not to be wondered at, seeing that the walls of even the poorest houses are washed, not with the staring white lime-

wash which we are accustomed to see at home, but with soft, delicate shades of yellow, and pink, and brown, which hides all deficiencies, and which takes on the most varied effects according to the light which falls on them; showing clear and vivid in the burning rays of the noonday sun, and soft and mellow and mysterious when that same sun sinks in misty splendour, or when the moon rises and the stars peep out.

As a contrast to the soft, fairy-like tints of the walls, the roofs of the houses, which have such a gradual slope as to be nearly flat, are tiled with dull red tiles, which turn to ruddy brown as the years go by; while the wide timbered eaves, which project far out over the street, add to the quaint effect, and throw a grateful shade on the narrow pavements below.

In one square we seem to have stepped out of this work-a-day world altogether, into that where the adventures related in the "Arabian Nights" took place, in another we find ourselves being driven through an open-air picture-gallery.

Or, as our equipage proceeds slowly along a fashionable street lined with richly furnished shops, we are suddenly confronted by a beetling

fortress, not plastered, but built entirely of stone, on the battlemented roof of which we might well expect mail-clad warriors to appear. Soon our Jehu takes a short cut, through narrower streets and under dark archways where the light of day can hardly enter, and we would fain call to him to go slowly, at a snail's pace, if he will, so fascinated are we by the glimpses of quaint home-life which we see on every side. Artisans in their workshops; women seated on stools on the pavement, preparing food for their next meal, or, having already cooked it, eating broth, macaroni, or beans, out of an earthenware pipkin balanced on their knees; girls sitting in groups on the doorsteps, busy over the finest of embroidery, or talking to strangely dressed countrymen who have come in the early morning from the country, and who, now that their business is over, are having a mild flirtation with Francesca, or Giulia, or Teresa, before wending their way homewards.

Then some low, cavernous archway running under some great palace will be traversed, and we are once more out in the broad streets and bright sunshine, this time near the Arno, perhaps, where pensions abound, and where

wide-arched doorways, sufficiently large to allow a carriage to pass through, afford us glimpses of cool courtyards and gardens, which, although they cannot boast the smooth green turf to which we are accustomed in England, are bright with sparkling fountains and gay flowering shrubs.

We are fortunate indeed, if we chance to have an introduction to the owners of some of these enclosed pleasances, for then we have the privilege of entering in and feasting our eyes on a tangle of colour the like of which we rarely see. Pink and white camelias, the ivory blossoms of magnolia, fire-red pomegranate flowers, yellow laburnums, purple wisteria, heavy sprays of lilac, luxuriance of roses—red, white, and yellow—and prim little orange-trees, gay both with blossom and fruit in spring, laden with fruit in autumn, which are set in green wooden tubs round the edges of the paths. Besides the flowering shrubs there is a wealth of flowers, especially in spring, early summer, and autumn, for in July and August the heat is so great that they wilt and wither. But, with the exception of these two months, flowers are almost always to be found in a Florentine garden.

First Impressions

If we chance to arrive in the city in the early morning, especially during the summer months, we shall find the streets thronged with people, the markets busy, the fruit and flower sellers doing a thriving trade. Should our train be due between 12.30 and 3, we might be justified in thinking that all the inhabitants who could afford to do so had gone to the country, leaving their houses shut up; and that the Musical Harper, known in fairy lore, had marched through the streets with his wonderful harp, lulling those who had remained behind to sleep. Although the shops are open, there are few passers-by to enter them, and all the dwelling-houses present nothing but long rows of windows closed in a most monotonous fashion by sparred wooden shutters, like venetian blinds set stiffly in a frame, through which plenty of air can enter, but which entirely excludes the sun. While on all sides are figures of workmen clad in dull yellow blouses, who, having thrown aside their tools, have stretched themselves out, face downwards, in whatever bit of shade they could find—on the broad stone or marble ledges which run round all the large houses, palaces, and churches, and which serve as a convenient seat to any weary

wayfarer; in doorways, under arches, or even on the pavement itself—and have fallen fast asleep. For in Italy the noontide siesta is as much a part of everyday life as bed, breakfast, and supper are.

In the late afternoon and evening we should find yet another scene. Outside the cafés are placed numberless chairs and little white covered tables, and there the more leisured citizens assemble in hundreds to while away an hour or two in talking and drinking tea, eating ices, or listening to a band should there chance to be one within hearing. As evening advances the working folk are afoot also, many of them finding seats on the ledges of the public buildings or the steps that lead up to them. Here they enjoy the coolness of the evening air, and when they return to their homes in the narrow and cramped streets they do not always retire within their dwellings, but will pull their mattresses out on to a gallery or roof loggia, if they are fortunate enough to possess one—if not, on to the pavement of some quiet courtyard —and there they will pass the night.

Photo by] [*McLellan*

LA CASA DI DANTE

In this house, which has been rebuilt, the poet Dante was born in May A.D. 1265.

CHAPTER II

BY BRIDGE AND RIVER

IF the general opinion of those who know Florence best were taken as to where sight-seeing should begin, there is little doubt that the answer would be, "Either at the Piazza del Duomo, or the Piazza della Signoria."

But I should go, first of all, to the Ponte Vecchio, that quaintest of quaint bridges, which spans the Arno near the centre of the town; because it is there, more than anywhere else, that one enters into the realization of how things began. Not only of how the city came to be built, but of how the artistic genius which suddenly sprang to birth and flowed over the whole of Tuscany in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was nourished and fostered, not in regular studios and in elaborate surroundings, but in tiny little bottégi, or workshops, where, in serving their time as goldsmiths' apprentices, and learning to model and carve in precious metals, such great masters as Verrocchio, Brunelleschi, Ghiberti, Donatello, Botticelli,

Leonardo da Vinci, Perugino, and Michael Angelo learned the rudiments of their art.

For, with the exception of a few open arches in the centre, the bridge is lined on either side with a long row of tiny, irregularly built shops, most of which are occupied by goldsmiths and jewellers.

These men do not only sell their wares on the old bridge, they have their homes and workshops there as well, and if we take the trouble to do so we can get many a glimpse into the well-lit workshops which are to be found behind the tiny front rooms, and see skilled craftsmen and their apprentices, clad in clean linen overalls, bending over their benches, busy at their work.

Where the living-rooms in these tiny houses are it would be difficult to say, were it not that one can retrace one's steps to the broad street or quay which runs along the north bank of the river, and which is known as the Lung' Arno, from which we can obtain an outside view, as it were, of the ancient bridge.

Then we see that, built out from the back of the houses which are crowded upon it, there are numberless little extensions—odd rooms, balconies, and loggias—which literally overhang the river, and cling, like swallows' nests, to the

walls of the original buildings. It is in these that the families of the goldsmiths dwell, and delightfully quaint and cosy places of abode they must be.

Along one side of the bridge, rising above the shops, is a curious stone gallery, which runs the whole length of the structure, and loses itself in the houses which crowd down to the water's edge on the southern bank of the river, and at the other side in a stately building which abuts on the Lung' Arno.

Having noted all this, let us go back to the centre of the bridge, and, leaning over the parapet, under one of the open arches, gaze down into the green waters of the Arno, and think for a moment of the story of the growth of the city, and of the part which this ancient structure and its predecessor played therein. It will not be wasted time, for it will help us to understand better the meaning of many of the things which we shall see in Florence.

We think first of all of the Etruscans, that strange, artistic people about whom so little is known, who came from the East at least a thousand years before the Christian era, and took possession of the greater part of northern Italy, establishing themselves in colonies on the

tops of high hills, where they could defend themselves with comparative ease against all comers.

One of these colonies fixed on the hill of Fiesole, which stands to the north of Florence, and overlooks the valley of the Arno at this point. There they built for themselves a citadel and walled town.

For many centuries, while as yet the city of Florence was unthought of, the Etruscans lived and flourished there, as they did in other parts of the country. Then gradually the Romans obtained the supremacy, and the Etruscans became the conquered race. It must have been in those days, when the "Lords of the World" were spreading their network of highroads all over Europe, that the first little bridge over the Arno was built, to carry the highway which led to Rome.

Then it was that the dwellers in Fiesole, who, through marriage and other causes, were gradually losing their individuality, and becoming merged in the Roman nation, came down from their homes on the hilltop, and began to build houses for themselves near the end of the bridge, in the flowery meadow which lay between the river and the hill on which their city stood. This we know, because Etruscan

remains have been found near the side of the old market-place, now occupied by the modern, and exceedingly ugly, Piazza Vittorio Emmanuele.

The little cluster of houses grew and extended till at last it blossomed into a township, for which a name had to be found to distinguish it from the parent city on the hill.

Numerous explanations have been given why the appellation of Florence was chosen. Some say that it is derived from the name of a Roman general, Florinus, who encamped in the meadow, and fell in a skirmish with the Fiesolans. Others, that it is a corruption of the word Fluentia, and that the town was so named because it was situated at the junction of the Arno and the Mugnone, a stream which flows into the Arno at this spot.

But the most popular and reasonable, as well as the most picturesque, derivation is that the name was taken from the lilies, the Iris Florentia, which grew, as they grow to-day, in wild profusion in the fields.

When, a century before the Christian era, the distinguished Roman general, Sulla, acquired by force of arms the Dictatorship of Rome, he punished all who had sided with his rival, Marius, by depriving them of the Roman

franchise, and bestowing their territory upon his own soldiers.

The Fiesolans and Florentines seem to have been amongst the number, for the old records tell us that their land was taken from them and bestowed on one of Sulla's legions. The new colonists speedily gave to Florence the character of a Roman town, laying it out, in miniature, on the model of Rome. It was believed to be under the special protection of Marta, or Mars, the god of war, and a statue of this god was erected on the north bank of the river near the end of the old bridge.

A hundred and sixty years later Christianity was introduced. As early as A.D. 313 we find a bishop established here, who had, for his cathedral, a little church, dedicated, it is supposed, to San Salvador, which stood where the magnificent Duomo now stands.

Thus, at a very early date we find the nucleus of the present city: the bridge, which was her *raison d'être*, the church, and the market, which was held in what had been the Roman Forum, and which existed as the Mercato Vecchio until not so many years ago.

With the market-place and the bridge in our minds, we can trace for ourselves the gradual

growth of the city's prosperity, a prosperity which had brought it, by the end of the twelfth century, to the proud position of a small commonwealth, which was governed by its own magistrates, and owned no allegiance to any outside power.

With a highroad which connected them, on the one hand, with all parts of the great continent which lay on the other side of the Alps, and which, on the other, led direct to Rome, and with easy access to the seaports both of the Mediterranean and the Adriatic, the merchants of Florence were not content with merely carrying on their business at home, but pushed their way farther and farther afield, until they were known, especially as traders in silk and wool, in every part of the known world, from Syria to Great Britain.

And, luckily for themselves, they were not ashamed of their trades, even when they grew so rich and powerful that they lived in palaces, and founded families who ranked with those of the nobles of the land; but banded themselves together in Arti, or guilds, and were as proud of belonging to the guild of the hosiers, or the silk merchants, or the armourers, or the gold-smiths, as someone at the present time might be

of belonging to a family "which came over with the Conqueror."

It shows us something of the manly pride and satisfaction which these old Italian burghers took in their honest handicrafts, when we read that no one, not even a noble, might become one of the eight Priori, or governing magistrates of the city, unless he belonged to one or other of the trades guilds.

But although these merchant princes were proud of their city, and of the means by which she had risen to the position of influence and power which she held, they were terribly jealous of one another, and no sooner did the head of one family show signs of becoming of more importance than the heads of other families than the latter, forgetting for the moment their own petty quarrels, banded themselves together to overthrow their upstart neighbour.

So there were constant frays and fights going on in the narrow streets, just as "bickers" and "tulzies" used to go on between the members of the various Scottish clans in the streets of the Scottish capital. So, in order that they might have strongly guarded places of refuge, these rich Florentine merchants built for themselves enormous mansions, which bore, and still

Photo by] [*McLellan*

THE PONTE VECCHIO

Showing the back of the goldsmiths' houses overhanging the river. The stone gallery above connects the Pitti and Uffizi Palaces.

bear, the proud name of Palazzi, or palaces, but which were in reality fortresses, and, when the doors were bolted and barred, could quite well stand a siege if need be.

Those palaces still remain in the streets to-day, massive and impregnable as ever, and, as we walk through their lofty rooms, and examine the vaulted ceilings and frescoed walls, the wrought metal and quaint woodwork that adorn them, we realize what strange contrasts the lives of these city fathers presented.

They took their full share in the rude and barbarous strife and bloodshed that went on in the streets, while, at the same time, they lived in stately dignity, and did all that in them lay to encourage art and culture. For, awakening in the year 1294 to the fact that cathedrals were being built in Pisa and Siena, and not wishing to be outdone in municipal zeal by the signoria of these neighbouring and rival cities, they bestirred themselves, and, securing the services of a skilled architect, Arnolfo di Cambio, set to work to build in haste, not only a cathedral, but a palace for themselves as well, in which they could transact municipal business, also a palace for the Bargello, or head of the police, and another great church, that of Sante Croce.

Of course Arnolfo did not live to see these buildings completed, other men had to be found —Giotto, Brunelleschi, and Ghiberti—to finish them, but it seemed almost as if the need arose in order to call out the latent genius, derived, perhaps, from their Etruscan ancestors, which lay hidden in many a Tuscan schoolboy of that day.

For not only had the buildings to be completed, it was also necessary that they should be embellished, so we find the various guilds, in their corporate capacities, offering large sums of money for an altar-piece, or fresco, or bit of statuary to be placed in church, or hall, or market. And youths, who had hitherto been content to be apprentices in the workshop of some goldsmith or sculptor, vied with each other to obtain the prizes; and, in so doing, succeeded in producing such magnificent works of art that they sprang at once into the notice, not only of the inhabitants of Florence, but of the whole of Italy.

It was when the Bargello and the Palazzo della Signoria were a-building that the old bridge on which we stand was reared, the earlier Roman structure having been destroyed by a flood in 1333. Nearly six centuries have passed

since then, and most of the old manners and customs of mediæval Florence have disappeared, swallowed up in the cosmopolitanism of the twentieth century. Standing on the Ponte Vecchio, however, and watching the ordinary everyday life of the people, we have two links that bind us to the past. One is, as we saw before, the jewellers' and goldsmiths' shops, with their busy workmen—for, although the old guilds are now disbanded, the craft of the artificer in precious metals seems to have been handed down from father to son—and we cannot forget, as we look at the tiny, cage-like houses, that they were specially built for the Guild of Goldsmiths by Cosmo de' Medici, first Grand Duke of Florence. It was the same Cosmo who caused the covered gallery that runs along the bridge to be built, in order that he might have a private means of communication between his two ducal residences—the Pitti Palace, which stands on the south of the river, and the Palace of the Uffizi, which stands near the end of the bridge on the north.

The other link is to be found in the renaioli, or sand collectors, who at all times of the day are to be seen at work, either in their boats on the surface of the broad river which

flows under the bridge, or on the bare stretches of sand and pebbles which border its banks.

Sometimes we would take these men for fishermen, sometimes for casual labourers, and it comes rather as a surprise when we are told that they are a distinct clan by themselves, whose occupation has been handed down from father to son for centuries, and who are deeply resentful if any outsider tries to push himself into their ranks.

It was probably the building of the great palaces which called the renaioli, as a class, into existence. There were good stone quarries within reasonable distance of Florence, where plenty of solid blocks of stone were to be obtained, but the signoria required the walls of their palace fortresses to be as strong as the solid rock ; so, as there was always a plentiful supply of gravel and sand in the bed of the Arno, brought down in flood-time from the neighbouring hills, the mediæval architects hit on the method of building a double wall of stone, and filling in the intervening space with coarse gravel, and then completing the process by pouring over the gravel enough cement, made of fluid sand and water, to form it, when the mortar had set, into one solid mass, which, as the centuries have proved, is almost indestructible.

This method of building is obsolete, but as a residential town Florence is always extending, and both in the city itself and in the villages round about there is a constant demand for sand for making mortar, etc., so the trade of the renaiolo is a fairly lucrative one.

Besides, he is a fisherman as well, so he has two strings to his bow, for when he cannot obtain sand he catches fish, and when the day is unpropitious for fishing he turns his attention back to sand.

There are two classes of renaioli. For every sand gatherer has not money to buy a boat. So the labour is divided, the aristocrats of the profession being the boatmen, or barcaioli, who go out on the river and gather in the finer sorts of sand; the others are the piaggiaioli, who, possessing no boats, are compelled to remain on the banks, collecting what sand they can obtain there, and separating it from stones and pebbles by throwing it against a wire screen—placed in a sloping position so that the sand goes through the meshes and falls in an ever-increasing heap on the ground behind, while the gravel and stones fall back from the screen, and are cast away as useless.

The barcaiolo, on the other hand, has

nothing to do with a spade or a sieve. For, with his flat-bottomed boat, he is in a position to go all over the river, seeking for the sand which, after a flood, is deposited in little sand-banks in the bed of the Arno.

His boat, as we see, is of a curious build: low at the prow, high at the stern, where there is a little raised platform—the "predellino"—on which the barcaiolo stands when he is punting his little craft along with his long pole, trying to locate a sandbank—for these deposits vary in situation with every flood.

When he has found one, he moors his boat beside it, again with the aid of his pole; then, lifting his "pala," which is just another pole with an iron scoop at the end of it, he scoops the sand up into the body of his boat until it is so heavily laden that it sinks to the water level. Then he makes for the shore, where he sells his boat-load to a carter, who in turn sells it to a builder.

Six lire a cart-load can be obtained for good sand, and, as the price is rising it is computed that a renaiolo can earn from his dealings in this commodity alone something like £50 a year.

It is very picturesque to watch these barcaioli at work, for in warm weather they often throw

Photo by] [*Ballance*

SUNSET ON THE ARNO

Showing the back of the houses of the Borgo S. Jacopo. Most wonderful colour effects are to be seen in the evening.

off all their upper garments, and we see them standing, lithe and alert, clad only in a ragged shirt and bright coloured sash, their supple, sunburned limbs showing brown and bronze against the clear translucent green of the river, while the wet sand piled at their feet in the centre of the boat glistens and sparkles in the sunlight.

When the building trade is slack, and the demand for sand falls off, or at odd times, such as the evening when the hard work of the day is done, renaioli turn their attention to fishing.

They find this also a lucrative employment, as any fish which is brought from the sea is expensive, and can only be bought by the richest section of the community. So the fishermen of the Arno cater for the general public. After they have caught their fish, they carry them into the poorer streets in gourds strung to their waists, and wander up and down hawking their wares. No matter whether they fish from the banks of the river or from their boats, they never use a line, but always a net. And the variety of these nets, and the different methods of using them, add to the variety and interest of the scene.

There is the "bertaile," a bag-shaped net which is stretched on rings and set in the osiers

by the side of the river; and the "caccia" and "trap pola," which are fastened to frames like shrimping nets and pushed in front of waders; and the "bilancia," which we see fastened by four corners to a crossed bamboo and let down from the prow of the boats.

About eight varieties of fish are to be found in the Arno, including grogni, or eels; trota, or trout; reina, or carp; and broccioli, a fish which needs to be most carefully prepared for cooking, as it is poisonous, and serious consequences might follow if every care were not taken in preparing it for the table.

We have already spoken of the colouring of Florence as being one of its greatest charms, and nowhere can this be studied to greater advantage than from the Ponte Vecchio, and from two other bridges which span the Arno above and below it—the Ponte alle Grazie and the Ponte S. Trinita. Indeed, it is quite impossible to describe the delicate, almost unearthly effects which one gets there in varying seasons, and at different hours of the day.

To begin with, the river varies in colour as no other river seems to vary. A thread of gold under the midsummer sun, the chilly tramontana of winter, sweeping down from the

Photo by] [*Burton*

AN OPEN-AIR LAUNDRY

Washerwomen washing clothes at the foot of Ponte S. Trinità.

Apennines, turns it to a dirty grey, or the colour of steel. Again, after a spate it flows in a tawny brown torrent flecked with yellow foam, showing by its colour the amount of earth and sand which it carries along with it. Then when the flood has subsided and the sand fallen to the bottom, although the current still flows strong, it has changed its hue to a green that is as clear as jade, and which will change again to a rosy red in the rays of the setting sun, deepening into purple where the shadows fall.

Then there are the houses of the Borgo S. Jacopo, and those of the Via de' Bardi, which stand with their backs going straight down into the river, so that there is not even a foot-path between the walls and the water. Surely if there is a quaint bit of architecture to be found anywhere it is to be found here. The backs of those houses are one mass of picturesque towers and gables and overhanging roofs, of queer projecting windows, tiny loggias, and unexpected bits of hanging garden sandwiched in, perhaps, between a buttress and a balcony, over the rail of which the family washing is drying in the sun. The houses are old and rather dilapidated, for this is one of the most ancient parts of the city, but all deficiencies are covered

—to the casual observer at least—by the deliciously soft tints of the limewash by which the walls are coated.

Different shades of yellow are the prevailing colours here, from the palest cream to saffron and orange, but fawny tints are to be found also, terra-cottas and pinks fading imperceptibly into heliotrope.

The dark reddy-brown of the tiled roofs gives a restful contrast, and these again stand out clear and sharp against the deep blue of the Italian sky.

Indeed, in summer, the view from any of these bridges might be a little too vivid, were it not for the sombre background which is formed by the stately cypresses which clothe the hill of S. Miniato, which rises behind the old houses on the south.

As we stand here looking from bridge to river, and from river to ancient dwelling-houses, we notice that the piscatorial art is not confined to the renaioli. For here and there at the side of windows set far up in the crumbling walls we see nets suspended by pulleys which the inhabitants let down into the river occasionally, and we imagine that it is upon the nature of the "catch" that the next family meal depends.

CHAPTER III

BY CHURCH AND PALACE—I

THE north end of the Ponte Vecchio leads directly to a street bearing the name of the Por Santa Maria, and if we follow this for a short distance and then turn to the right along the Via Vaccherecia, we find ourselves in the Piazza della Signoria, which, from the municipal point of view, has always been the heart of the city.

There are few public squares in the whole world, perhaps, excepting, of course, the Acropolis of Athens or the Capitolium of Rome, where a more striking contrast can be had between the memories of the past, which the surrounding buildings call up, and the gay, careless tide of present-day life, which is constantly surging across its wide pavement.

Facing us as we enter the square from the Via Vaccherecia, stands the massive Palazza Vecchio, which has been well described as "one of the most resolute and independent buildings in the world." Rising to the height of four

stories, and built of enormous blocks of stone, the sense of grim, overwhelming strength is relieved by the beautiful tower—the highest in the city—which rises above it and which is finished by a crown of stone in which hangs an ancient bell, the "vacca," or cow, beloved by the people of Florence. Perchance, in olden days, this affection was mingled with dread, for it seldom rang except as a call to arms, or when some danger threatened the city and a council of citizens was hastily summoned.

"La vacca mugghia"—"the cow lows"—they cried to one another, as they seized their armour and hurried to respond to its call.

In front of the Palace stand some striking statues—the Hercules and Cacus of Bandinelli, fashioned by that sculptor out of a block of marble which was chosen by Michael Angelo in the quarries of Carrara, but was never used by him; a copy of the famous Marzocco, or Lion of Donatello; and a copy of David by Michael Angelo. The originals of the two last mentioned statues have been deemed too precious to be exposed to the accidents which might befall them in a public square, and have been removed to the Bargello and the Accademia respectively.

Photo by] [*Burton*

VIEW FROM THE PONTE S. NICCOLÒ

Showing the Lung' Arno, the Bell-tower of Sante Croce, the Campanile, and the Duomo.

The term "Marzocco" is a puzzle to most people. It is the name given to the symbol of the protector of Florence, and carries us back to the days of the Romans, when the city was supposed to be under the protection of Mars, the god of war. As we have seen, a statue of this god stood near the Ponte Vecchio, but it was washed away by a flood. Thereafter a Lion, symbolic of strength and majesty, was substituted for the figure of the god, and the animal was represented as seated and guarding the arms of the city. The Marzocco, wearing an enamel crown set in gold, was placed in front of the Palazzo Vecchio as a symbol, visible to all, of the strength and power of the Florentine Republic, and as such was kissed by prisoners of war in token of submission.

In mediæval days a "ringhiera," or platform, was built in front of the Palace for the use of the signoria, who sat in state upon it to watch the Festas held in the square beneath, or to hear the proclamations which they desired to issue read by their officers to the attendant citizens.

It was from this platform, which was demolished in 1812, that the Fathers of the City watched the martyrdom of Savonarola and his

two companions on the 23rd of May, 1498. And it was in the grim old Palace behind that the great preacher and his two friends spent their last night on earth, and partook of their last Communion before they were led out to die.

To-day, the ringhiera is replaced by a flight of stone steps, and as we mount them and take our seats alongside some of the beggars and loafers—who, alas! are unhappily so common in Italy—on the broad stone ledge which runs round the Palace, it is difficult to picture to ourselves the dire happenings of these olden times, so very different are the scenes on which we are looking down.

True, there is a Loggia de' Lanzi at right angles to us, across the corner of the square, forming part of the Uffizi Palace, recalling to our minds the turbulent age when even the Medici did not feel themselves safe without their own private bodyguard of Swiss lancers, but now it is filled with statuary, and forms a shaded refuge from the noonday sun for tired workmen who take their siesta here. It also serves as a convenient place where tourists can read, or write their letters, for the General Post Office is just round the corner, and the

ubiquitous seller of picture postcards is never far off; while the little street arabs make of it a special playground, chasing each other with childish unconcern round the base of the Perseus of Cellini, the Judith and Holofernes of Donatello, and the Rape of the Sabines of Gian da Bologna.

In the morning especially, the whole square is full of life and movement. Servants with baskets on their arms are hurrying across it on their way to market, priests and nuns are returning from Mass, and the quaintness and variety of their distinctive habits add to the interest of the scene. Here we see the ordinary black soutane and shovel hat of the parish priest; there the coarse, loose brown gown and twisted cord girdle, the bare head, and sandled feet of the follower of St. Francis of Assisi. Following him closely comes a Dominican friar, in his white gown and black cloak, while occasionally we may see a Carthusian monk, dressed entirely in white.

This square seems to be the great meeting-place for business men, for there are always crowds of them standing about, reading the newspapers, smoking and talking; while on the edge of the pavement close under the Loggia

de' Lanzi, as if to accentuate the contrast between mediæval and modern times, various stallholders take up their position and sell papers and post-cards, also cooling drinks of various kinds, from lemonade made on the spot from fresh lemons, to the most sickly and insipid of syrups.

On Fridays the square is thronged with countrymen, who come in the early morning from the surrounding neighbourhood to talk over agricultural affairs, and to transact any business which they may chance to have on hand. These Tuscan peasants present a very picturesque appearance, especially in winter, when they appear in fur caps and terra-cotta coats—which, however, are going out of fashion.

As we sit on this coign of vantage, we cannot help noticing that a constant stream of people comes up the steps towards us and disappears under the arched doorway of the Palace at our back. If we were to follow them we should find that, although there are tourists amongst them who are bent on exploring the massive building, the great majority pass through the beautiful courtyard of the Palace without even taking time to glance at its fountain—one of the treasures of Florence which was wrought in

Photo by] [*Burton*

THE COURTYARD OF THE PALAZZO VECCHIO

Here we see Verrocchio's fountain, a most exquisite work of art.

bronze by Verrocchio, and represents a boy with a dolphin. The fact is that this quiet little courtyard is used as a passage between the square and the Via de' Leoni, or the Street of the Lions, so called from the lions that were kept in an enclosure near by as a compliment to Scotland, and in memory of the Scottish King, William the Lion, who on one occasion interceded with the Emperor Charlemagne for the restoration to Florence of her liberty.

Recrossing the square, and leaving it by the left-hand corner, we enter the Via Calzaioli, or the Street of the Hosiers, which leads directly to the Piazza del Duomo, and which is to-day, as it has always been, one of the busiest thoroughfares of the city.

As we traverse it we pass, on our left, one of the most interesting churches in Florence, the Church of the Trades Guilds, or Or San Michele. Once a tiny little Lombard church dedicated to the patron saint of the Lombards, and standing in a garden or orchard, then transformed into a granary or corn-market, it gained for itself the curious appellation of San Michele in Orto, from the Latin *hortus*, a garden, or *horreum*, a granary.

In the thirteenth century, when it was still

used as a corn-market, miracles began to be shown forth, "according to the historian Giovanni Vinnani," by a figure of Saint Mary "painted on a pilaster of the loggia of S. Michele in Orto."

The fame of these miracles spreading abroad, pilgrims flocked from all parts of Italy, and the offerings which they brought soon accumulated to a very large sum. This money was applied to building a beautiful shrine for the Madonna, the work being committed to Andrea Orcagna. When his task was accomplished, the work was so beautiful that the magistrates, recognizing that it was more fitting that the shrine should form part of a religious building rather than of a public market, removed the corn-market to another part of the city, and the merchants, who had become keenly interested in the matter, were at liberty to erect the present church in which to deposit the shrine.

Determined that the casket should be worthy of the jewel which it contained, they made up their minds that not only should the inside of the church be as beautiful as they could make it, with marble and carving, and rich stained glass, but that the outside should be beautiful as well. So each of the great Trades Guilds

offered to supply a statue to be placed in one of the vacant niches which had been built in the walls.

As we look up at these beautiful life-sized figures, erected by the most famous Florentine sculptors, we realize that one of the most extraordinary things about this wonderful city is that priceless works of art can be left exposed, as these are, in the open street, and that they are so cared for, and reverenced by the people, that it is possible for them to remain there, century after century, looking down on the stream of life which passes below them, without being chipped and broken by stones aimed at them by schoolboy or vandal hands.

It is true that the most perfect of them all, Donatello's St. George, given by the Guild of Armourers, has been removed to the National Museum in the Bargello; but, like the Marzocco, and Michael Angelo's David, it was felt to be too precious to be left outside, even in Florence.

The interior of the church is somewhat dark, owing to the fact that altars have been erected against most of the windows; and in the gloom it is difficult to make an adequate study of Orcagna's masterpiece, which took him ten years

to complete, and is said to have cost eighty-six golden florins. It has been spoken of as the most perfect example of Gothic art in existence.

A little way farther on, the Via Calzaioli merges into the Piazza del Duomo, that world-famed square in which, when we visit it for the first time, we would be almost inclined to imagine ourselves in fairyland, were it not for the tramcars which radiate from this centre to all parts of the city, and to the surrounding suburbs as well.

For before us rise three buildings, all of which are coated with different coloured marbles —white, dark green, and pink—making a picture which is almost startling in its brilliancy.

These are the ancient octagonal Church of San Giovanni Battista, once the cathedral, at all times the Baptistery of Florence; the larger and more modern Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore—St. Mary of the Flower—which, besides being coated with the three varieties of marble which I have mentioned, glitters with mosaics, and is crowned by a dome of rosy red; and, loveliest of all, the tall, slender Campanile, or Bell Tower, built by Giotto, which is so delicate in its beauty, so calm, and fair, and

Photo by] [*Ballance*

PART OF THE INTERIOR OF THE CHURCH OF S. CROCE

The first tomb is that of Michael Angelo. The monument beyond the altar is in memory of Dante.

stately, that it has been compared to "the Lily of the Annunciation."

The Baptistery is the oldest building in Florence, and, as it was built on the site of the Roman Temple of Mars, it is probable that the stones of its walls, hidden under their coating of marble, are identical with those which were employed in the erection of the earlier building. This custom of covering stone walls with slabs of marble is peculiar to Italy, where this costly material is so easily obtained, and has probably been handed down from the days of the Etruscans, as the term used for this special kind of mosaic is "gheroni," from an Etruscan word which means "small pieces."

Compared with the radiant freshness of the Duomo and Campanile, this curiously shaped church, with its worn metal dome, seems old and weather-beaten, but, in its three double gates, which stand on the north, south, and east, it possesses treasures which are reckoned among the greatest trophies of art. For one of these gates was fashioned by the hands of Andrea Pisano, and the other two by Lorenzo Ghiberti, almost sixty years being spent by the two sculptors on their production.

It was of the gates on the east, which face

the Duomo, and are the work of Ghiberti, that Michael Angelo said "that they were worthy to be the Gates of Paradise." These, however, are always closed, and entrance must be sought by the north or south gate.

At all times of the year the interior of the Baptistery is dark and cool, and it is very restful to pass out of the heat and glare of the Piazza into its dim light, and hushed, mysterious atmosphere.

The windows are narrow, and placed high up in its walls, but they give us sufficient light to let us see the beautiful mosaics set in a background of gold, with which the entire dome is encrusted, and the massive granite pillars and tessellated pavement of black and white marble, which is said to have suggested patterns to the silk weavers when they first settled in Florence in the beginning of the thirteenth century.

But, beautiful as the Baptistery is in its form and ornamentation, its principal interest lies in the fact that all the infants born in Florence, from the days of Dante down to the present time, have been baptized here.

The font that we see is old, but it is not that in which the poet and his Beatrice were baptized. That appears to have been a very curiously shaped font, having a large basin in

the centre suitable for immersion, and smaller basins round it. These outer basins must have been fairly large, however, for on Easter Even, when the Baptistery was crowded with citizens, all of whom were trying to light their tapers from the Easter candle, a little boy named Antonio dei Caviccinoli fell into one of them, and would have been drowned had it not been for Dante, who, in his efforts to lift the child out, broke the basin altogether.

Some years afterwards, when, in the Castle of Malaspina, he was writing and perfecting his "Inferno," he remembers this, and tells how in his descent into the nether world the rocks "all pierced with many a hole" remind him of—

> "Those stones which in my beautiful St. John
> Are found, where priests baptize each infant soul,
> Whereof, not many years back, I broke one,
> To save a child that lay a-drowning there."

Unfortunately, the quaint old method of keeping the baptismal roll—dropping a black bean into a box for each boy that was baptized, and a white one for every girl—did not preserve the names of the newly christened children, else the baptismal roll of San Giovanni during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries would have been of intense interest.

At any hour of the day we may see a baby brought in to be baptized, but if we want really to realize what the dim old church stands for in the life of the people of Florence, we will come here on a Sunday afternoon and watch baby after baby, each accompanied by its sponsors and little group of friends and attendants, being brought to be received into Christ's Church.

For apparently Sunday is the christening day, and, if we have patience to wait, we may see as many as twenty or thirty babies receive their names and be received into the fold of Christ's Church.

They are baptized in the order in which they arrive, and each baby has a ceremony to itself. There is often quite a row of christening parties, some very poor, some apparently in a good social position, sitting side by side, waiting their turn. The infants who are brought from the poorest homes are generally the youngest, most of them being only a few days old ; for the more ignorant Italians have still the dread that a child may go to "Limbo" rather than to the blessed Paradiso should it chance to die unbaptized. Bound up with this belief is the superstition that witches may work havoc with

an unchristened child, but that they dare not tamper with anyone who has been signed with the Sign of the Cross. So, for both these reasons, they bring their children to the Baptistery as soon as they can be taken out of doors. It is amongst this class that the practice of swaddling children still lingers, and although most of the tiny things, swaddled or unswaddled, wear spotlessly white gowns, occasionally one sees a baby swathed from armholes to ankles in stiff corded material, after the pattern of Andrea della Robbia's bambini, and carried, a curiously stiff, motionless little object, on a white cushion, by its nurse or sponsor.

In the upper classes it is more customary to wait till the child is a fortnight or three weeks old, thus making it possible for the mother to accompany it.

All the babies, rich or poor, are brought into church with a covering over their faces, and here, it would appear to most people, the poorer children have the advantage. For, while the richer mites seem to be in danger of being smothered by the coverings of corded silk or satin, heavily embroidered with the Sacred Monogram in gold, in which they are enveloped,

their humbler little neighbours are allowed to breathe through muslin or net.

Each service is gone through carefully and reverently, but naturally no time can be lost, especially when there is a crowd of babies; so two priests are engaged in the work, and take the services alternately. When one is filling up the certificate and necessary papers for the child he has just baptized, the other is busy with a fresh comer.

However much opinions may differ as to points of doctrine or ritual, I think no one would be inclined to deny, as they stand in this time-honoured spot, hallowed by so many memories, that there is much that is impressive in the symbols used by the Roman Church in this initial rite—in the lighted candles held beside the baby by the assistant deacon, as an emblem of the Light of the Gospel; in the few grains of salt that are put into its tiny mouth, as a sign of the life that is incorruptible; in the laying of the end of the priest's stole across its breast, as, at a certain point of the service, it is carried nearer the font, as a sign that it wears Christ's yoke; and in the other lighted candle round which its tiny fingers are clasped, after it has been duly baptized and anointed, to

typify the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity, which from henceforth ought to radiate from its life.

One of the most interesting ceremonies which takes place in the Baptistery is that of blessing the font for the coming year on Easter Even, and is performed by the Archbishop.

When he and the clergy who accompany him have taken their places, the font is filled with water, which the Archbishop signs with the Sign of the Cross, thus dividing it into four. A few drops of water from each division are then thrown to each point of the compass, north, south, east, and west. After which the prelate breathes on the water, and, dipping the paschal candle into it three times, invokes the Holy Spirit in these words: "May the power of the Holy Ghost descend into the fulness of this font."

Thereafter the congregation is sprinkled with the newly blessed water, and a few drops of two of the oils used in Church services—the oil of catechumens and the oil of chrism—dropped into it; the ceremony ending with appropriate prayers and a litany.

Across the square from the Baptistery is the

Duomo—that rose-coloured mountain of marble which Arnolfo planned, Giotto and Andrea Piscano contrived, and Brunelleschi crowned. Truly it is a magnificent cathedral, second in size only to St. Peter's at Rome. But, in spite of the sense of rest, and quietness, and space which its vast and somewhat bare interior gives, it is, I think, its exterior, with the life and movement which goes on around it, which appeals more closely to most people. For, like St. Paul's Cathedral in London, the noise and stir of the city life surges up to its very doors, and the life-sized figures in the beautiful mosaics set above the principal entrances look down tenderly on little children busy with their childish games at the corners of the broad stone steps that lead up to it; on tired men and women who, at midday, find, on the broad marble ledge running round the sacred building, a resting-place where they may eat their frugal lunch, or, stretched face downwards, sleep peacefully for half an hour or so; and on pigeons which flutter up and down, preening their feathers in the sun, and feasting on crumbs thrown to them by tourists.

Skirting the steps on the north and south run busy streets, the starting-place for trams

Photo by] [*Burt*

COLONNADES OF THE UFFIZI

Showing in the distance the Tower of the Vacca, the bell of which called the citizens to arms.

for all parts of the city; and the clanging of tramway bells and hooting of the curious horns carried and blown by the conductors, mix and mingle with the cries of passing street vendors in one confused medley of sounds; while, in striking contrast, the sweet-toned bells, high up in Giotto's Campanile, far above our heads, ring out at stated hours, summoning the faithful to Mass, or Vespers, or announcing to all the other churches that the hour of the Angelus has come.

If one happens to be in Florence at Whitsuntide, it is worth while ascertaining when the Cresima, or Confirmation, is to be held in the Duomo, and attending it. Very often this ceremony takes place on the evening of Whit-Sunday.

When we enter, we find that the vast church no longer looks dark and sombre, for in the centre of the nave, a vast oblong square has been railed off, and an altar raised at the east end. This square is filled by hundreds of tiny children, most of them about the age of six or seven, who have been brought in bands, each under the care of a parish priest, from the various parishes in Florence and from the surrounding villages, to receive the rite of

Confirmation, which in the Roman Church takes place at an earlier period than it does in the Anglican Communion.

The children kneel facing the altar, and, as might be expected at their tender years, are much more taken up with their white frocks and spotless suits (for all parents, even the poorest, try to dress their little ones in white for the occasion) than with the solemnity of the service in which they are about to take part. They are restless, too, poor little mites, and desperately afraid that they will lose the two necessary adjuncts to the ceremony, which they have been well warned not to drop, which they grasp tightly in their hot, grubby hands.

These are a certificate of their fitness for confirmation, signed by their priest, who gave them what simple instruction was necessary; and a little band of white silk ribbon, long enough to tie round their heads, with a little gold cross worked in the centre of it.

Behind the children stand their parents and relations, and behind them again tourists and sightseers, among whom we must range ourselves.

Presently the Archbishop appears in front of

the altar, accompanied by attendant priests, and, after saying some prayers, begins to move round among the kneeling children, preceded by one priest and followed by another. The priest who leads the way takes the certificate from a child, glances at it, and reads out the name. The Archbishop confirms the child, and signs it on the forehead with the oil of chrism, just as it was signed at its baptism. He then gives it a tap on the cheek, to show that it must endure suffering in the flesh, and passes on to the next child, while the second priest takes the silken band, and binds it round the newly confirmed child's head, arranging it so that the gold wrought cross covers the cross that was traced in oil. These bands must be worn by the children for three days, to show that they are not ashamed of the Cross of Christ, and, thinking of the homes from which many of their wearers come, we can imagine that they will be no longer white at the end of that period.

One would expect to find the little girls wearing veils for their Cresima, but this is not so, veils being reserved for the first communion, which takes place when they are twelve or thirteen.

Things Seen in Florence

At the north-west corner of the Piazza del Duomo, just opposite the Campanile, stands a plain, unpretending building, which might be taken for offices of some sort. It is, however, the headquarters of that most famous and unique society, which, for six hundred years, has been closely connected with the history and character of the Florentine people—the Misericordia, or the Society of the Brothers of Merciful Hearts.

Up till recently we met a little company of these brethren every now and then, as we walked about the streets, and, if we had not heard about them previously, we gazed at them in astonishment, and wondered who they were. For they were clad from head to foot in loose black cloaks, and over their heads and faces were drawn curiously shaped black hoods, so that they were quite unrecognizable. There might be six, eight, or ten of them, walking in procession, two and two; and generally the couple in front were wheeling between them a long black stretcher, covered with black oil-cloth. As this strange, mysterious company passed along, all hats were raised, by rich and poor alike, and no wonder, for the men whose identity was thus concealed were on their way

Underwood & U. [*London & N. York*

THE DUOMO, CAMPANILE, AND BAPTISTERY

Only a part of the Baptistery is seen against the base of the Campanile. The latter is considered one of the most perfect buildings in the world.

to render help to some sick person, or "first aid" to someone in an accident. They carried with them all appliances suitable for the case—food, wine, brandy, spirits, or bandages—and they were prepared to take entire charge of any sick, injured, or dying person—attending to them at home, conveying them to a hospital, or, should they be past all human aid, caring reverently for the dead body, and, if need be, carrying it to church for the funeral service, and afterwards burying it.

These charitable acts are still performed by the Brothers of the Order, but the stretchers have given place to up-to-date ambulances. Funerals are always conducted in the evening, and it is a picturesque and weird experience to meet a funeral procession when dusk has fallen, as it suddenly emerges from some narrow chiasso, or alley. In front walks a priest, repeating the *De Profundis* and accompanied by acolytes bearing crucifix and torches. Then comes the bier, carried by black-robed Brothers of Mercy, accompanied by other Brothers, who walk on either side bearing flaming torches which light up the surrounding buildings with a lurid light. Friends and relatives follow, some of whom also carry torches, and in this manner they pass to

some church, where a service is held, and the body rests all night, to be buried next day either in the fashionable cemetery of San Miniato, or in the humbler God's Acre at Trespiano.

There is no "respect of persons" among the Brethren of the Misericordia. Its service is voluntary, a freewill offering, and men of all ranks belong to it, from the humblest tradesman up through the professional and leisured classes to the King of Italy himself. It is this spirit of spontaneity and self-sacrifice that has always distinguished the Order, and it is because of it that the black gowns and hoods are worn—to ensure that no member may be recognized as he goes on his errand of mercy, and so obtain the "praise of men."

In bygone days a certain number of Brethren were always in attendance at headquarters, taking the duty by turns, and if any case of sickness or any accident occurred which necessitated more help being needed a signal was given from the summit of the Campanile, and, no matter where the Brethren who were liable to be called out for service that day were, they were expected to leave their work, or business, or pleasure instantly and repair to headquarters,

where, in a room lined with cupboards, the dress of each member was kept.

Nowadays only a few paid officials, and one or two of the more leisured Brethren, remain on duty at the "Residence," as the building in the Piazza del Duomo is called, other members being summoned by a bell-call, in case of need. But the same rule as to prompt attention to the summons obtains. At night three Brethren and two porters sleep on the premises.

This interesting society sprang from a very humble beginning. Its founder was a porter named Pietro Borsi, who lived in the thirteenth century, and was employed, along with a number of others, in carrying the bales of cloth sold at the annual cloth fairs held in front of the Duomo on the feasts of St. Jude and St. Martin.

Finding that his companions had nothing better to do than to gamble in their spare time, and that when they were doing so oaths were common, he suggested that for each blasphemous word a fine should be paid, and a litter bought with the proceeds, which the porters might use in turn to carry home the unfortunate victims who might chance to be

wounded in the street frays which were so common at that time.

So, from the brave suggestion of a street porter, sprang the Misericordia of Florence.

The Patron Saint of the Society is St. Sebastian, and on the 20th of January, which is his festival, practically the whole city throng to the little chapel of the Society to do both Saint and Brethren honour. Having duly said their prayers, they sally forth again, and buy large supplies of the very special cakes which are baked for the occasion, and sold all day long from stalls erected in front of the Residence.

Looking across the Via Calzaioli from where we stand, we see a beautiful little loggia, which, however, is closed by an iron grating, through which we can see a bas-relief of the Madonna and Child, attributed to Arnoldi, a pupil of Andrea Pisano, which for many centuries must have been exposed to the open air. This is the Loggia of the Bigallo, another old and charitable institution, which has done much for the welfare of poor children.

If we have only seen the Loggia de' Lanzi, and this exquisite little Loggia of the Bigallo, we may think that such buildings were erected in mediæval times alone, when the streets were

Photo by] [*McLellan*

FOUNTAIN AT THE LOGGIA OF THE PALAZZO VECCHIO

The picture shows the copy of Donatello's "Merzocco," and Michael Angelo's "David."

so foul and unclean that those who could afford to do so had these open galleries, if we may call them so, built in order that they might have some place to walk in, and enjoy the air, apart from the vulgar crowd; and that to-day they are only to be regarded as survivals of the past. But this is quite a mistake: the loggia is a feature, and a very pleasant feature too, of present-day Florentine family life.

We have only to ascend to the Loggia of the Palazzo Vecchio to see the truth of this. For here we are above the city, and can look down on a vast expanse of dull red roofs, broken by intersecting streets and by the silver ribbon of the Arno. And as we do so we become aware that a great part of the domestic life of the people, especially of the poorer districts, is lived on the housetops. For almost every house has its roof loggia, often very humble and homely: just a roof supported by four plaster pillars, and a low wall to prevent children falling over the edge.

Many of these loggias serve the purpose of roof gardens as well. For flower-boxes are numerous, and vines, rambler roses, and wistaria are trained over the low walls or up against the side of a higher house.

Here we see a busy housewife hanging out the clothes to dry, there a cooking stove has been erected and the mother of the family is occupied with culinary arrangements, while one or two brown-faced children, and a long-legged, rough-haired puppy, are tumbling over one another at her feet. In a roof loggia a few streets away, a woman sits by her sleeping child, busy at a pile of sewing, and a birdcage hangs on a pillar above her head. The more fortunate people who have gardens have their loggias built against their garden walls. And often they have these built sufficiently high up to allow them to look over the wall, if they wish to do so, and down into the street below. So, when one is passing through some narrow lane, shut in on either side by high, uninteresting stone barriers, one may hear merry voices above one's head, and, looking up, may see, behind the nodding roses or spray of fragrant lilac that peer over the trellis at the top, the eager faces of daintily dressed children, anxious to get a glimpse of the "turisti inglesi."

CHAPTER IV

BY CHURCH AND PALACE—II

IT is impossible, in a book of this size, to do more than mention some of the other churches and palaces of Florence, no matter how full of interest and beauty they may be.

Next to the Duomo and the Baptistery, the most interesting churches are, perhaps, S. Croce, in the south-east corner of the city, not far from the Arno, and S. Maria Novella, on the west, close to the central station.

They are, in a sense, rivals, for S. Croce was built by Arnolfo di Lapo for the Franciscans, while S. Maria Novella was the chosen shrine of the Dominicans.

Consequently we find, as we would naturally expect to do, that in the one everything seems to bear on the life of the sunny-hearted Brother of Assisi; in the other, all our thoughts are directed to the sterner and more militant saint of Spain.

In the splendid, large, light church of the Franciscans, with its floor of rosy stone, we can

read the life of the founder of that Order, in the carvings on the panels of the pulpit, and in Giotto's matchless frescoes in the Cappella Bardi. Here, too, in a chapel at the end of the west transept, we find Donatello's famous crucifix, which was despised by Brunelleschi, whose criticism was that the figure hung upon it was merely that of a contadino, or peasant, not that of the Christ. Everyone knows the rest of the story, how Brunelleschi set to work to make a rival crucifix in private, only letting his friend see it when it hung completed in his room; and how the simple-hearted Donatello, letting fall, in his astonishment, the eggs which he was carrying in his apron, exclaimed, in wholehearted admiration, quite untouched by envy, "Ah! Brunelleschi, to thee it is given to make the Christ."

Brunelleschi's crucifix is also preserved. It hangs in a chapel in S. Maria Novella.

As well as being the church of a great Order, S. Croce is the place of burial and memorial of all those whom Florence delights to honour. Michael Angelo takes his long rest here; so does Machiavelli and Alfieri; while tablets in memory of Dante, Galileo, Mazzini, Rossini and others are to be found in aisles or nave.

Photo by] [*Burton*

A CORNER OF THE BOBOLI GARDENS, SHOWING PART OF THE PITTI PALACE

This Palace is the Florence residence of the King of Italy, as well as a Picture Gallery.

S. Maria Novella, on the other hand, is somewhat bare, without many interesting tombs or memorials; but it is rich in frescoes, the most famous being those of Ghirlandajo in the choir, and those in the Spanish Chapel which opens out of the cloisters.

Here, in an enormous fresco, we see the Dominicans in their much-vaunted character of Defenders of the Church Militant, under the guise of black and white hounds (the Canes Domini, or Hounds of the Lord), chasing heretics, who figure as wolves.

Midway between those two churches, in the Via del' Proconsolo, we find a church with a beautiful tapering spire, which, like the dome of the Cathedral and Giotto's Tower, can be seen from all parts of the city, and which, although it has been restored, is very ancient, and was originally built for a third religious Order—that of the Benedictines. This is the "Badia," or Abbey, of Florence. Here the great Count Ugo of Tuscany, son of the foundress, is buried, and his beautiful tomb, by Mino da Fiesole, is one of the many works of art which the building contains. The special treasure of the Badia, however, is Filippino Lippi's masterpiece, the celebrated

easel picture of the Madonna appearing to St. Bernard.

Another of the massive palace fortresses, which are so characteristic of Florence, stands opposite this church.

This is the Bargello, which, as we have seen, was built at the same time as the Duomo and the Palazzo Vecchio. There are many beautiful things in this palace, which is now used as the national museum—statues by Donatello, including his St. George, his David, and his young St. John the Baptist; statues by Michael Angelo and by Verocchio; delicate terra-cottas by the Della Robbias, wrought in that mysterious glazed pottery which they alone could produce. Also some frescoes by Giotto, in which he has introduced the figure of his friend Dante. But the most beautiful thing of all is the ancient courtyard of the palace itself. Its loggia, its statuary, its colouring, its many coats-of-arms, and, above all, its outside staircase running up to the second story, all form a picture which it is impossible adequately to describe.

From the Bargello it is but a step back to the Piazza della Signoria, and if we cross that square to the Loggia de' Lanzi we find our-

selves at the corner of the enormous Uffizi Palace which runs, on both sides of the street, down to the Lung' Arno, on the north bank of the river. As everyone knows, the Uffizi Palace, which was built by Cosmo de' Medici, is now one of the most famous picture-galleries in the world. It enters from the Loggia de' Lanzi, and is connected, as we have seen, by the covered gallery which runs along one side of the Ponte Vecchio, with the Pitti Palace, which is situated on the south bank of the Arno.

There are immense picture-galleries in this latter building also, but it serves as well for the state residence of the King and Queen of Italy when they visit their Tuscan capital, and old retainers of the House of Savoy in royal livery keep a watchful eye on all who enter.

It is fruitless to try to describe the contents of the many miles of galleries through which one may pass in these two palaces. Countless books and catalogues have been written and compiled on the subject. To visit them is a serious, yet necessary, undertaking, and one or two practical remarks may be useful.

To begin with, the galleries, in common with the other galleries and museums of Florence, are not free except on Sundays.

When the entrance fee is once paid, there is no readmission, so it is well, when setting out to do sightseeing of this kind, to choose a time, preferably the early morning, when a good many uninterrupted hours lie before us. Moreover, in hot weather it is as well to supply oneself with a light wrap as well as with a sunshade—the wrap to be worn *inside* the building, not outside—for the thick walls and marble staircases of these old palaces are apt to make the interiors of galleries and museums very cold, and the sudden change of temperature from the blazing sunshine outside is liable to produce sudden and unexpected chills. This rule is still more applicable in visiting the churches, which, owing to their marble floors, are even colder.

There is no need, for anyone who does not especially want to, to climb the long flights of stairs in the Uffizi. A lift is provided in the room where one leaves one's umbrella, and for the small sum of twopence-halfpenny much needless fatigue can be avoided. No reasonable person would wish to attempt the Uffizi and Pitti galleries the same day—that is, if they wished to retain any clear impression of even a few of the masterpieces which they

Photo by] [*McLellan*

A PICTURESQUE CORNER

A corner of the Church of Or San Michele, and the Guild House of the Arte della Lanna or Wool-combers.

contain; but everyone should certainly walk through Cosmo's gallery—which is lined with portraits, chiefly of the Medici family—in order to enjoy the fascinating peeps which its windows afford of the river, and of the quaint old streets which run between the Arno and the Piazzi Pitti.

Two great churches, S. Spirito and S. Maria del Carmine, are to be found on this southern side of the Arno. S. Spirito was built by Brunelleschi—he who gave to the cathedral its rose-tinted dome. It is large, severe, and splendid, but is more noted for its architecture than for its paintings. Very different is it with the Carmine—as the monastic church of the Carmelite Order is generally called. Although the greater part of the building was destroyed by fire in 1771, and has been rebuilt in modern style, happily one old chapel, that of the Brancacci, escaped, and here we see some precious frescoes by Masaccio—precious because this gifted painter, who died when he was only twenty-six, gave, in the fourteenth century, a fresh impetus to Italian painting, which had somewhat languished in the hundred years which had elapsed since the time of Giotto. It was to the Carmine that Perugino, teacher of Raphael, came, when, as a poor

and unknown lad, he lived in Florence, and struggled to keep soul and body together on a wretched pittance, in order to spend his time in learning the secret of colouring by gazing at Masaccio's wonderful frescoes.

There is only space remaining to mention four other religious buildings—two churches, a chapel, and a monastery—before this chapter draws to a close. Those are the huge basilica of San Lorenzo, the tiny little church of S. Martino, the chapel of the Spedale degli Innocenti—or Foundling Hospital—and the disused monastery of San Marco.

San Lorenzo is a very ancient church, which was enlarged and embellished by the Medici, who chose it as their family burying-place. It had a great, octagonal, dome-capped mausoleum built for the purpose (the Cappella de' Medici), adjoining which is the Sagrestia Nuova, or New Sacristy, built by Michael Angelo, and containing six of his most famous works—the statue known as Il Penseroso, which is a life-size figure of the young Duke Lorenzo de' Medici, father of Catherine of that name; a statue of his uncle Giuliamo; and four other figures which represent night and day, twilight and dawn.

Although the members of this famous

Florentine house did so much for the interior of the church which they had chosen for their last resting-place, they left the outside of the building incomplete, and the rough, unfinished brickwork of the façade—which was intended by Michael Angelo to be covered with marble, and decorated by statues set in the niches—forms a very untidy object, in a very untidy square. For this is a poor part of the city, mean and squalid, without being picturesque ; and on most days of the week one finds a market in front of the church, the counterpart of which might be found in any Yorkshire or Lancashire town. Here are stalls laden with cheap haberdashery, or with old clothes, with crude postcards, and highly coloured sweets and toffee, while even the crockery is ordinary and commonplace ; and one is glad, as one wanders through it, swallowing mouthfuls of gritty dust meanwhile, that there are other and more picturesque markets to be found in Florence. Yet here Browning bought the pamphlet on which he founded the "Ring and the Book."

The little church of San Martino is a striking contrast to that of his brother Saint of the Gridiron. Standing in the tiniest of squares, in a perfect rabbit-warren of narrow streets,

and overshadowed by tall, many-storied houses, it yet has some tender memories, and, what is more, a living tie to the affections of the poor folk of Florence, which the larger and infinitely more magnificent building lacks.

For memories, we have only to think of little Dante Alighieri, playing with his childish companions outside its walls—for the great poet is said to have been born in a house, now rebuilt, which stands opposite the church. And even if the exact site of the house has been forgotten during the long centuries, it is certain that he was born somewhere within a stone's-throw of where we stand, and that he was married in this tiny church, to honest, capable, Gemma Donati.

As to the tie that binds it to the hearts of the people, we have only to stand in the doorway at certain hours on certain days, and we will see a strange and touching sight. In the microscopic vestry, where one would naturally expect to see church records and receptacles for vestments, are piles of golden-crusted, freshly baked loaves, guarded by a kindly official, who regards the curiosity writ large on our faces with an amused smile. Presently a number of poorly yet decently clad people begin to arrive, in ones

Photo by] *[Burton*

THE LOGGIA DE' LANZI

This Loggia took its name from the Swiss lancers, or lanzi, that Cosimo de' Medici kept stationed here as his bodyguard.

and twos, and, slipping quietly into the vestry, produce tickets, which they exchange for bread.

"Some charity," we say, rather disappointed at such a prosaic ending. Oh, yes! But a charity upon which the fragrance of a good man's life, ended some five hundred years ago, still lingers.

We get the key to the story when we go round the outside of the church, and see an ancient stone almsbox let into one of the walls, with an inscription above and below. These inscriptions tell us that this is the moneybox of the Buonuomini di San Martino, or Good Men of St. Martin, and that the contributions are for the "Shamefaced Poor."

It was S. Antonio, the much-loved Prior of the Monastery of S. Marco, afterwards Archbishop of Florence, who founded this tenderest charity, and chose and banded together twelve of the most upright men he knew, merchants, most of them, to be the first Buonuomini, to act as his lieutenants in seeking out and succouring those, who, in the ups and downs of the restless times in which he lived, had found themselves plunged from affluence into poverty, and who, being too proud to beg, were in danger of perishing from starvation.

To the citizens at large he appealed for aid, and his appeal was not in vain, for money flowed into the old almsbox, which was new in those days, and, to judge from the sight that we have just been watching, it has flowed, in measure at least, ever since.

If the Society of the Good Men of St. Martin can be described as a "tender charity," the term is equally applicable to the work that is carried on in the Spedale degli Innocenti, that great Florentine institution which for four hundred years has opened its doors to receive and succour those little waifs and strays of humanity for whom, at their birth, there was neither place nor welcome.

A visit to the chapel would be incomplete unless we saw over the splendidly equipped hospital as well—for money is never wanting in Italy for charitable institutions, which are fitted out in a manner which excites the envy of philanthropists in other lands.

The building itself is no grim, barrack-like edifice. It is light and sunny and airy, and everything about it speaks of childhood. It is entered by a loggia, from the façade of which Andrea della Robbia's delicious swaddled babies look down on us, each from its own circle of blue.

Within, in the courtyard, another delightful picture awaits us, an Annunciation in relief, also by Andrea della Robbia, where, amidst spotless lilies, and surrounded by a circle of baby cherubs, the Archangel Gabriel is communicating the wondrous tidings to the Blessed Virgin.

In the chapel itself we find, as an altar-piece, Ghirlandajo's "Adoration of the Magi," where, beside the Wise Men from the East, two little white-robed innocents, with sword cuts on their baby heads, and halos round their brows, join in worshipping the Child.

The Hospital is under the kind and capable care of the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul, who have under them a number of clean, healthy-looking women, who act as nurses, and who are always dressed in white. Although the infants, if they are strong, are only kept in the hospital for six or eight weeks, after which they are sent into the country and boarded out with respectable peasants, who bring them up with their own families till they are old enough to go to service, the institution is always full; and we may walk through room after room, filled with tiny cribs, like iron clothes-baskets, which are lined with white, and swing from an iron

hook. Each has its own occupant, and each occupant has its own medal, with a number and a letter stamped upon it, tied round its neck.

This number and letter correspond to a name and address which is given to the authorities when the child is received, and entered in a book, so that when it is old enough it can trace its parentage if it chooses to do so.

Everything is worked on the newest hygienic principles. All the milk is sterilized, and kept in hermetically sealed bottles. The babies are weighed at intervals on scales, protected by a soft covering. Most fascinating of all, to baby lovers at least, is the room, carefully kept at an even temperature, where they are washed on a large table, fitted in the centre with hot and cold water, and where, during the process, they lie and chuckle and kick, not on the bare boards, but on a padded covering which extends over the surface of the table and is protected by oilcloth.

The same atmosphere of dainty brightness, which the della Robbia bambini shed around the Hospital of the Innocents, lingers also in the shady cloisters and plain little whitewashed cells of the Monastery of S. Marco, which stands just a street's length farther on.

For here Fra Angelico lived and laboured, and his frescoes, so exquisitely simple, and yet so beautiful, meet us at every turn. Over the door by which we enter the cloister is his "St. Peter Martyr," with finger on lips enjoining the Dominican rule of silence. Over another door we see two monks of that Order receiving the Christ in the guise of a tired traveller. Opposite us, is the Angelic Brother's "Crucifixion," which we find copied in each of the novice's cells.

Each of the cells which belonged to a fully professed Brother was decorated by a fresco depicting some scene in our Lord's life, by Fra Angelico's own hands. And not content with that, he painted one of his finest Annunciations on the passage wall.

The good S. Antonino was Prior here, before he became Archbishop; so was Savonarola, and we can see the double cell which he occupied when in that position, with his desk, stool, and crucifix, still remaining in it, also a volume of his written sermons, dark with age, but still quite legible, and in a case that hangs on the wall a morsel of his gown, and a charred fragment of the wood that formed his funeral pyre.

CHAPTER V

IN STREET AND MARKET

IF we really wish to catch the spirit of any foreign town or city we must cultivate the gentle art of loitering, otherwise we will lose a great deal that is quite as much or even more worth seeing than the stereotyped sights of the place.

In order to gain this insight into Florentine life we must leave such thoroughfares as the Via Calzaioli, or the Via Tornabuoni, which are the Bond Street and the Regent Street of the city, and wander into the network of narrower streets and alleys which lie south of the Duomo, between the Bargello and Sante Croce, and in the region known as the Oltr' Arno, which lies across the river.

We are fortunate, for instance, if we chance to be living in any of the pensions overlooking the Arno near the Ponte delle Grazie, for this is one of the bridges which forms an easy means of approach to the many barocci, or country

carts, which come into the city from the country in the early morning.

If we have travelled straight from France or Switzerland and have had no previous experience of Tuscan life, the rumble of the first baroccio which chances to pass under our windows on the morning after our arrival in Florence is an epoch-making sound, for it is our introduction to a certain atmosphere which cannot be described, but which, unless we are very unimaginative, will always rise up in our minds whenever we think of Italy.

To begin with, we cannot stay in bed when we hear it. For the rumble has accompaniments. A tinkle of bells, a cracking of a whip, and certain strange, uncouth cries, which sound so mysterious in the dawning light that we are forced to get up and look out into the street.

Then we see passing below us a long, curiously shaped cart, perilously balanced on two wheels. It is drawn by three animals, apparently of the equine species, but not of the same size; and it is piled up with a pyramid of great glass jars, half-buried in straw.

Beside the equipage walks the driver—a slim, agile figure, with a soft, black, broad-brimmed hat, while from the near shaft hangs a

lighted lantern, bobbing up and down like a will-o'-the-wisp.

Later in the morning we will have plenty of opportunity to examine a baroccio at close quarters, for there will be numbers of them standing round by the Via de' Neri and the Loggia del Grano.

And it is worth while to do so, for the baroccio, like the barca, or river boat, is a relic of the past, when all the merchandise of the city had to be conveyed backwards and forwards by road or water. It is always fashioned in exactly the same manner, out of seven kinds of wood. Beech for the shafts, cypress for the floor, acacia for the drag, ilex for the spokes of the wheels, walnut for the naves and felloes, and so on. So that, in spite of its somewhat ramshackle appearance, the baroccio is rather a valuable adjunct to a farm, over the making of which much time and trouble has been spent.

These carts are very light, being composed only of a floor and framework, and it is amazing to see the numbers of flagons of wine or jars of oil which can be piled upon them and brought in safety over miles of rough road, with nothing but a little straw between the layers of bottles to prevent vibration. Under the cart hangs,

Photo by] [Anderson

A MAJOLICA SHOP

Notice the "Annunciation" by Andrea della Robbia on the wall above.

apex downwards, a triangular arrangement of strong wooden spars, which just clears the ground when the baroccio is in motion, but which rests upon it when the horses are unyoked, thus forming a third support, and so preventing the cart from tipping either backwards or forwards. Within this triangle a basket is hung, which forms a convenient receptacle for any sundries the driver desires to carry with him.

The lantern hangs here also when it is not in use. The gubbia, or team of animals which draw the baroccio, is worth studying. Sometimes it is composed of two, sometimes of three quadrupeds. These may be either horses, ponies, or mules ; very often one of each species is represented. The only rule is, that the biggest animal goes between the shafts, the smaller beasts walk meekly on each side, fastened only to one shaft. If it is winter all three are covered with bright red blankets ; if it is summer, with nets edged with knotted fringes to keep off the flies. Sometimes, if it is very hot, a cotton sheet is added.

The quaint trappings of these animals add to the picturesqueness of the whole turnout. For the essential part of the Tuscan harness is a wooden saddle, which all horses carry, and

which is finished in front by a high brass-covered horn, studded with nails, and hung with little bells. Besides these adornments, the sides of the saddle, the breast strap, and the breeching are decorated with bright-coloured tufts of red or blue wool, while the strap between the horses' eyes, and very often the tufted breast-strap, are set with tiny mirrors of silvered glass of all shapes and sizes.

Occasionally also a fox's tail or a wild boar's tusk may hang at the cheek-strap, and a pheasant's feather is fastened between its ears; while, if we were to make friends with the driver and persuade him to allow us to examine the saddle closely, we would be almost certain to find under the trappings that cover it a fierce-looking blue eye painted on the wood, outlined by deep gouge-marks which are coloured bright red.

The discovery of this eye would make us suspect, especially if we knew anything of folk-lore, that the contadino has some other motives in view than mere ornamentation when he decks the harness of his mules with tiny looking-glasses, pheasants' feathers, and tufts of wool.

And so it is, for Italian peasants have a great fear of the powers of darkness and a firm belief in witches and the evil eye. Therefore, as they

must travel many a lonely mile on country roads, they deck their horses with amulets, with bells and looking-glasses, tufts of wool and foxes' tails in order to frighten off these unhallowed spirits. And, above all, they stamp an evil eye, which is always supposed to be blue, on their own belongings, thus rendering them impervious to malign influences from outside.

The contadino is very mindful of the comfort of his team, for, as we see, every animal, be he horse, mule, or pony, has a deep rope basket full of hay fastened to his headgear, and as this basket hangs down just in front of his nose he can take a mouthful whenever he halts for a moment.

Many of these men, especially those whose barocci are laden with wine or oil, hold the position of fattore or steward on large estates in the country, and they are on their way to the wine or oil merchants with part of the produce from the vineyards or oliveyards of which they are in charge. In bygone days, when every Tuscan landowner of any pretensions had his palace or mansion in Florence, the wine and oil from the estate were brought direct to the family house in town. There it was sold, retail, by the portinajo or porter, generally an

old family retainer, through a little window which opened by a sliding panel, close to the great door of the courtyard.

Nowadays, however, the great nobles and gentry have their town houses for the most part in Rome, and their Florentine mansions have passed into other and less aristocratic hands. So the fattore is obliged to take the products of his well-tilled land direct to the dealers.

Sometimes the baroccio is drawn by a pair of pure white Val de' Chiana oxen, with long straight horns and black noses. Although they are so big, these animals are unequalled for gentleness and docility, so much so that their driver guides them, not with a rein, but with a wave of his hand. And they can turn and twist so cleverly that they are used in preference to horses in ploughing among vines and fruit-trees.

The writer will never forget her wonder, as, when she was going one evening with some friends to the Certosa of the Val d'Ema, which lies about two and a half miles from Florence, she saw a peasant ploughing his little strip of vineyard, which lay on a hillside, with one of those huge animals. The patch of ground was so little and so steep, moreover, it was terraced,

Photo by] *[Burton*

MERCATO DEL ERBI

The Vegetable Market of San Ambrogio.

and fig and mulberry trees grew in it as well as vines, and as the animal turned and twisted so that the little plough behind could go close to the roots of the trees, it seemed as if its weight must bring everything down—earth, trees, and vines—in one great avalanche.

It is interesting to note that these Val de' Chiana oxen are really the old breed of Roman cattle—the "milk-white steers" of which we read in history.

While we have been studying the baroccio and its contents, its driver has probably been slaking his thirst at one of the lemonade stalls which are to be found at almost every street corner, or if it chances to be the season of the cocomero, or water melon, he may have brought his team to a standstill beside the stall or barrow where slices of that luscious fruit can be obtained.

If this is the case, we speedily find that a cocomero stall can be quite as picturesque in its way as a baroccio. For the colouring of the fruit makes it valuable for decorative purposes even on a street stall, and the cocomero vendor seems to have an eye for effect as well as profit. For he has cut a number of water-melons into thick round slices, which he has hung on the frame-

work of his stall, where the rosy-red discs set in their circle of cool green rind, show up like great peonies as one approaches. On the stall itself are wedges of melon, each laid on a separate vine leaf, which passes with the piece of fruit into the hands of the buyer, and can be used as a plate or napkin.

On a corner of the stall stands a great green earthenware basin, full of vine leaves covered with water, in order to keep them fresh till they are needed. This basin also serves, alas, as a receptacle for the "soldi" which the stallholder receives, and which, when change is required, he hands out wet but comparatively clean to the next buyer.

By and by the water-melons will disappear along with the rest of the autumn fruits, and all sorts of nuts will take their place: walnuts, hazels, and chestnuts—especially the latter. For chestnut trees grow luxuriantly on the hills at the foot of the Italian Alps, and their fruit forms the staple food during the winter, not only of the peasants who live under their shade, but also of many of the poor in cities as well.

The chestnut harvest is the most important event of the year to the hill folk, and when the first frost of the season has come, about the

Feast of St. Martin, they beat down the nuts with poles, and gather them in sacks and baskets. The finest they sell to agents who come from distant cities to purchase them for confectionery firms, to be turned out later as *marrons glacée*, and such high-class sweets.

A large proportion are dried by the peasants over slow fires in huts built for the purpose. They are then ground into farina dolce, or sweet flour, which is either stored for household use, or sold. Then the more enterprising of the mountaineers set off to Florence and neighbouring cities with the remainder of the crop. There they establish themselves till after Christmas.

"Sono arrivati, i buzzurri" (The chestnut men have arrived) is the common remark in the city, and a welcome sight they are to everyone, be he rich or poor. For even to the rich, who can roast their buzzurri and eat their castagnaccio and necci at home, the sight of the glowing charcoal brazier over which the chestnuts are roasted in the streets is a cheerful sight in the dreary wintry days (for in November and December even the City of Flowers can be chilly and dreary enough); while to the poor, who can for a few soldi buy at the chestnut

stall a good handful of piping hot nuts, which they can either carry away with them or eat while they linger round the glowing brazier, the comfort and value of this humble fare is untold.

Nor is it by the roasted nuts alone that the buzzurri cater to the wants of the populace. In the little shops which they have taken, and which serve, so to speak, as their headquarters, their wives or sisters are busy from morning to night cooking the chestnuts in various ways, and baking delicious and wholesome cakes with chestnut flour. Here we can buy not only roasted nuts, but "bollite," or boiled, as well. These are lifted out of huge copper cauldrons, where they have been cooked with fennel to improve their flavour. A favourite preparation is chestnut flour boiled like porridge until it is so thick that it can be turned out, a stiff chocolate-coloured mass, on to a wooden board, where, when it is wanted, it is cut in slices with a string, and either eaten hot on the spot or carried home to be fried.

The most common varieties of cakes are castagnaccio, which is made by filling a shallow copper tray with dough, over which is sprinkled aromatic "pinoli," or kernels of the cone of the

Photo by] [*Burton*

AN OPEN-AIR KITCHEN IN THE VEGETABLE MARKET

Notice the woman cooking fritters, which can be eaten, piping hot, on the spot.

stone pine. The tray is then placed in the oven, and as the copper retains its heat for a considerable time the castagnacci, when they are baked, are often carried in their tins out into the streets, especially on to the bridges over the Arno, where they are sold in slices to the passers-by.

"Necci" are smaller cakes, which, in the country at least, are baked between flat stones which have previously been heated in the fire.

When we are visiting the shops of the buzzurri, we are certain to come across those of another very interesting class of men—the charcoal vendors. We generally find them in cavernous cellars, into which we peep with a certain amount of hesitation, the interiors are so dark and the proprietors so begrimed and fierce-looking. Yet here we touch a very important branch of industry. For were it not for the charcoal-burners of the Apennines—whose fires we see far up over our heads if we chance to travel by night by the base of these mountains—and their agents who sell their produce in the city, the Florentine housewife would be in a very awkward predicament indeed. For as all coal that is sold in Italy is imported, charcoal is used for all cooking

purposes, and in a great measure as the principal means of heating as well.

Oak is the wood that is most commonly used in the production of charcoal. When the trees are felled, the branches and trunks are cut into lengths and bound closely together in heaps of regular size in such a manner that a square cavity is left in the centre. This cavity is filled with carefully prepared firewood which will ignite easily.

The heaps of wood are then covered over with brushwood, earth, and turf, so as to exclude all air; but before the last turf is laid on, and the whole pile, as far as may be, hermetically sealed, a burning stick is dropped into the firewood in the centre so as to set it alight. When this has been done, and the aperture closed, the fire, which owing to lack of air burns very slowly, is allowed to do its work undisturbed for several days, at the end of which the earth and turf are removed, and if things have gone rightly a heap of blackened charcoal is found which is ready to be sent down the mountain-side for use in the cities. Things do not always go as smoothly as this, however, for if the pile happens to be badly built, or the covering thinly laid on, the wood

may burst into actual flames instead of smouldering, in which case the entire heap is spoilt.

Ordinary firewood, sawn into logs, is sent down from the mountains also, especially from the Forest of Vallombrosa, and sold to burn in open fireplaces. Another useful article of fuel which can be purchased in those dark recesses are small round cakes, known as "forme," which are made of the refuse from tanneries, and serve the same purpose in Florence as briquettes do at home. Large fir-cones are also sold for fire-lighters, and form a very ornamental form of firewood.

But to return, after this digression, to the street stalls. When the buzzurri have sold all their store of chestnuts, and the brightening sun and lengthening days make charcoal braziers seem a little out of place, our eyes are refreshed by brilliant patches of orange and lemon showing here and there, and we find stalls piled with these fruits, while branches of their glossy foliage are twisted round the framework, changing the bare boards into regular bowers of green.

When the first touch of spring is felt in the air, the flower-stalls and the flower-girls with their baskets appear everywhere—in the market-place, at the entrance to churches, on the steps

of loggias, in the doorways of hotels. Their stock-in-trade varies with the seasons. First come snowdrops and primroses, then jasmine and primula, cassia and flaming tulips. At Eastertide we find countless varieties of lilies, lilac, violets, and hyacinths; in early summer, and in early autumn as well, gardenias, roses, irises, verbena, heliotrope, dahlias, carnations; then, later, chrysanthemums, marguerites, and geraniums which go on blooming till Christmas.

On the fruit-stalls, cherries and nespoli (a Japanese plum) replace oranges in April and May, to be followed by apricots, figs, medlars, cactus fruit, pears, and peaches; and so the year comes round again to the time of the cocomero, and of the luscious grape, which, however, is as little thought of as gooseberries are at home.

But to see the flowers at their best we must go on a Thursday morning to the Mercato Nuovo, which is close to the Piazza Signoria, and can be reached by the Via Porta Rosa.

This market, which was built by Bernardo Tasso for Cosimo I. about the year 1547, used, in olden days, to be the principal mart for gold and silk—two of the valuable commodities for which Florence was so famous.

To-day it is celebrated for the Tuscan and

Photo by] [*Burton*

A "BRONZISTA" OR WORKER IN METAL

In workshops like this, the great "Masters" learned the rudiments of their art.

Leghorn straw hats which the peasants bring from their country workshops and sell under its open roof; for the masses of flowers and flowering shrubs which, on certain days of the week, are piled against the grey pillars of its loggia; and, above all, for its bronze boar, that Porcellino, or little pig, on whose back the little boy in Hans Andersen's fairy tale had such a wonderful ride through the gallery of the Uffizi, and into the Church of San Croce.

The pig, which is found at one side of the building, is represented as raising itself on its front legs, and out of its mouth flows perpetually a stream of cold, fresh water. The bristly animal, which was cast by Pietro Tacco, and is a copy of an original marble now in the Uffizi, is beloved by the people of Florence, especially the children. For they have nothing to do when they are thirsty, but to clasp him round the snout and, bending back their curly heads, quench their thirst at the cooling stream.

It is worth while buying, in this market, one of the delightfully flexible Leghorn hats, which can be obtained here at small cost, but for which so much has to be paid at home.

These hats roll up like a roll of calico, and can be packed with the utmost ease, and, at the

end of a long journey, will come out as fresh and tidy as ever.

Straw-plaiting is, as we shall see when we visit Fiesole or Signa, quite an industry among the women and girls who live in the villages on the outskirts of Florence.

The straw is grown on Tuscan soil, and when it has been properly prepared and cut into lengths is sold in bundles to country women, who, with the aid of their daughters, plait it into narrow plaits, and sell it by measurement to a merchant, who either turns out the hats in his own little factory or re-sells the plaited straw to milliners in the city.

Very often as we are wandering round this market we come on a scrivano, or public letter-writer, who has established himself in some quiet corner ready to indite epistles for simple men and women, countryfolk most of them, who have not mastered the art of writing for themselves.

One of the greatest charms of Florence is the way in which we can watch arts and crafts of all kinds being carried on, if we know where to find the craftsmen.

I suppose no one visits the city without bringing home some souvenir in the shape of

leatherwork, embroidery, or jewellery, especially ornaments set in turquoises, or in the curious green-tinted stone, known as the matrix of the turquoise, which are a speciality of Florence.

The shops in the larger streets, as well as on the Ponte Vecchio, and along the Lung' Arno, are filled with these articles, and very beautiful they are. But they acquire a new value after we have crossed the Ponte Vecchio, and, turning to the left, have wandered along the Borgo S. Jacopo, and have entered the workshops there and seen the master craftsman and his journeymen and apprentices hard at work, in much the same way as the craftsmen of the Middle Ages worked, in whose bottegi the geniuses of the Italian Renaissance learned the rudiments of their art. Such workshops can, as we know, also be seen on the Ponte Vecchio, and, doubtless, in other parts of the city as well. But it was in the Borgo S. Jacopo, just after one turns round from the old bridge, that the writer saw them to best advantage. As one walks along the street one only sees the tiny little front shops with their open doors, and windows crowded with articles fashioned of delicately tooled leather or emblazoned vellum, or with jewellery, or richly chased gold and silver vessels,

most of which are intended for the service of the Church.

But if we enter one of these shops we find that another door at the back leads us into a large, airy workroom, well supplied with windows, which overlooks the river. Here the actual work is being carried on by neat-handed craftsmen clad in linen overalls. We watch with breathless interest a jewel being set, or a chalice or alms-dish chased and embellished, or some quaint design traced in glowing colours on the vellum page of some illuminated missal.

And these are not the only people who are to be seen at work in the Borgo S. Jacopo.

There are other and humbler occupations which are carried on almost in the open street. For a great many of the little shops which we find farther on have no doors at all, during the day at least, and their owners carry on their business in what looks like a series of open sheds. Here we find a cobbler sitting on his stool on the pavement in front of his tiny bottega, cobbling away as fast as he can, and exchanging confidences with his next-door-neighbour who is a carpenter. The bench of the latter stands across what, presumably, is his doorway, and the curling shavings fall into the

Photo by] *[Dante*

A STREET IN FLORENCE

Arches such as are shown in the picture are a common feature in Florence.

street, and are gathered up with great glee by a couple of curly-headed urchins.

Next we pass a blacksmith standing by his anvil, while in the dark recesses of his tiny smithy a heap of charcoal embers are dimly smouldering. Across the street we find a bottega di fornajo, or bakeshop, and here we may see curious circular cakes being put into an enormous oven by the help of a long spade. Close by the bakeshop a woman is engaged in cooking fritters; next door but one we find a coppersmith beating a huge copper vessel into the shape that he requires.

Presently a tall figure appears in the middle of the street, with a large vessel shaped like a very fat water-bottle hanging from his waist by a strap. "Pesci d' Arno!" he cries as he walks along. It is one of the renaioli from the Arno selling his catch of fish, and, if we know enough Italian to be able to enter into conversation with him, he will tell us that the strangely shaped vessel is in reality only a zucca, or gourd, which he himself has grown in his cottage garden and moulded into its present form by resting it on a board when it was growing, in order to make it flat at the bottom, and tying a tight bandage round it near the top,

in order to constrict it at the neck. Then, after it had attained the proper shape and dimensions and had been cut from its stem and ripened and hardened by being left lying in the sun for a time, he made it watertight by cutting off the top and pouring a little boiling pitch into it, and turning it round and round in his hands until the whole of the inside was coated by the pitch, which formed a kind of watertight glaze.

The zucca is an exceedingly useful vegetable, as it will grow in any corner of waste ground; so it is cultivated largely by the countryfolk, who not only find a ready market for it in its natural state, but who make great numbers of vessels like that which we have seen the renaioli carrying, and sell them in the poorer parts of the city, where people buy them instead of crockery, filling them with rice, beans, macaroni, salt, etc., and hanging them from the rafters in their kitchens.

We do not find much of the beautiful Florentine embroidery and hand-made lace in the Borgo de Jacopo. To obtain that we must once more cross the Arno, and go to the little shops which we find under the stone arches at the base of the great mansions that

look out on the Lung' Arno; or to those more pretentious sale-rooms in such streets as the Via Tornabuoni, or the Via Calzaioli.

The embroidery is only sold in these shops, however: it is executed by women and girls in their own homes; and as we pass along some side street we often see a group of them sitting on the doorsteps, or on stools on the pavement, chatting and laughing together as their busy needles fly in and out.

Most of these women have been taught their craft by nuns, under the auspices of a society known as the "Industrie Femminile," or Women's Industries, which society is well worthy of support; for in view of the fact that a great number of the slum children in Italy begin life as professional beggars, and are apt to continue in the same vocation when they are grown up, this society endeavours to get hold of young girls and give them a thorough training in all sorts of fine needlework and embroidery, so that they have a trade at their finger-ends, by which they can earn their own living, or at least help to do so.

The Industrie Femminile is an association (entirely undenominational) formed of ladies (Italians and foreigners) for the encouragement

of home industries. A branch of this association is to be found in most Italian cities. It undertakes the sale of the work produced, without the intervention of the middleman. Ladies in country districts organize and instruct in the revival of local forms of home work, such as weaving, embroidery, lace, basket work, etc. Two special exhibitions of work so produced are held in Florence—one before Christmas and one at Easter.

Photo by] [*Burton*

ROADSIDE SHRINE, VIA S. LEONARDO

Roadside Shrines are features of the Tuscan landscape. They contain representations, either in sculpture or in painting, of the Crucifixion, the Madonna and Child, or of some local saint.

CHAPTER VI

BY HEARTH AND HOME

VERY few people in Florence live in a self-contained house. The custom is rather to rent a flat, or to live in one of the flats of one's own house, and to let the others to strangers or to junior branches of one's own family.

This is because the houses are so spacious that it would be impossible, except a perfect retinue of servants were kept, to inhabit the whole of one of them. Moreover, the way in which they are built makes some system of subdivision almost necessary.

For even the old palaces, of which there are so many, seem to have been planned with a view to accommodating, not only the head of the family and his children, but his sons' families as well, and the more modern buildings have used the same method.

We always find a broad, roomy staircase, often of marble, which ascends from the ground floor to the top of the house. On

each landing two doors—one to right, one to left—give access to the suite of rooms situated on that landing.

This makes it an easy matter to divide the house into quartiere, or flats, each of which can be inhabited by one family, while the staircase is common property, and so are the services of the portinajo, who lives in a little room on the ground floor, and is supposed to sweep the stairs, take in letters and parcels, as well as any messages which may be left for those who live in the household of which he is the official caretaker. As a great deal of the comfort of life depends on how one stands in the favour of the portinajo, it is as well to keep on good terms with him, otherwise he can cause endless annoyance by mislaying letters and parcels, forgetting important messages, and so on.

Of course, we do not find porters in every house. That depends upon the circumstances of the tenants, although in Florence, more than in most cities, rich and poor are thrown together in a very wholesome manner; for the price of quartiere and rooms vary according to their height from the ground, and it often happens that some very rich and aristocratic family may be living on the first floor, while

the fourth or fifth may be inhabited by very poor but decent artisans.

When no porter is kept, various means are employed by dwellers on the upper flats to avoid the constant labour of going up and down the many long flights of stairs. The street door is opened by means of a strong wire, while, when message-boys arrive or the postman goes his rounds, a basket is let down to the street from a window, and drawn up again when the parcel or letter has been placed in it.

As regards rents, "apartments," as flats are generally called, are much cheaper on the south side of the Arno than on the north; while as to the superiority of one locality over another no fixed rule can be laid down, as one often finds charming apartments, with lovely views and quaint loggias and roof gardens, in very narrow streets, where the ground floor is occupied by tiny, poky shops.

As most of the houses have thick walls and floors of tirazzo, or varnished brick (in very luxurious dwellings the floors are of parquet), they are, as a rule, delightfully cool in summer, although somewhat dark when the sun-shutters are closed; but they are terribly cold in winter

unless carpets are laid down and provision made in the sitting-rooms for open fires.

For Florence has by no means an ideal winter climate. Indeed, in December, January, and February, when the bitter wind known as the "tramontana" sweeps down from the snow-covered Apennines, and sears the valley of the Arno with its keen icy breath, it is often intensely cold, and there is little comfort to be had in the large, bare rooms of an ordinary Italian house, heated only by a scaldino, standing forlornly in the middle of the floor.

True, every person in the house—and for that matter every person in the street as well—have their own private scaldino, which they carry in their hands, or use as a foot-warmer; but, even so, these funny little earthenware pots, filled with glowing charcoal embers, do not make up for a blazing fire, or even for a well-ventilated stove.

As for hot-water bottles, they are not used; but a good substitute is to be found in the trabiccolo, which is a framework of laths, shaped like a dish cover, and containing a clay pot full of hot ashes, which we may find rising like a hunch under our bedclothes in the middle of our bed when we retire to rest. Of course, it

Photo by] [*Burton*

A FISHERMAN OF THE ARNO

He is fishing with a bilancia, and carries a gourd strapped to his side, into which to put his fish.

has to be removed, but it leaves a comfortable heat behind it.

As elsewhere on the Continent, it is usual in a Florentine household to have early breakfast, consisting of coffee, rolls, and butter, served in one's own room; the public meals being luncheon or early dinner at midday, and another repast, which may vary between supper and a stereotyped late dinner, at seven. In upper-class houses afternoon tea is now a recognized institution.

Here is a fair specimen of the menu which we may have, or would have had before the war, at dinner in an ordinary Italian middle-class house: soup, omelet or dish of macaroni cooked with tomatoes or other vegetables, some variety of meat cooked in oil or boiled with rice or vegetables, chicken in some form or other with salad; or, when odds and ends need to be used up by the thrifty housewife, a "fritto misto," or "mixed fry," into which everything is put—scraps of meat, cold vegetables, rice, squares of bread, celery cut into dice, scraps of liver, and so on. In this heterogeneous dish these are all fried brown, and taste so deliciously that no one is inclined to ask what one is eating. Puddings are

more common in Italy than in France, and "chianti"—the ordinary red wine of the country—and fruit find a place at every meal. Mutton is inferior, rabbits are only eaten by the very lowest classes, but veal is excellent, and lamb can be had all the year round. Beef, kid, pork, and above all poultry, are staple articles of food. Butter is a luxury—oil taking its place as far as possible—and sweets and jam are rare owing to the high price of sugar. On the other hand, fresh fruit is cheap and most abundant.

In establishments where a cook is kept she generally does the marketing, as much chaffering and bargaining is needed if one would obtain commodities at fair prices; and mistresses, as a rule, prefer to avoid this disagreeable part of housekeeping. But "shopping by proxy" has its disadvantages, and if anyone intends to make a lengthened stay in Florence it is better to acquire a sufficient knowledge of Italian to make oneself understood, and boldly tackle both the stallholders in the market and the shopkeepers for oneself.

Catering for small households is much easier in Florence than it is at home, for things are sold in such a way that much more variety

in food can be obtained. There is no need for anyone to buy a whole fowl, for instance, if they do not wish to do so. All that is necessary is to purchase just that part of the bird that is required. If a fricassee is wanted, or an entrée, or a delicate repast for an invalid, one or both of the breast portions can be bought. If an ordinary stew is needed, the legs and neck are sold for the purpose at a very cheap rate. The wings can be included if necessary. For soup there is the carcase, while the combs, wattles, and liver are sold by themselves under the name of "regalia," going, as a rule, to the kitchens of the rich, to be used in the preparation of sauces and entrées. The principal market for food supplies is that of San Ambrogio, which is held in the Piazza Ghiberti, near the Porte alle Croce. This market, which is commonly called the "Mercato del Erbi," is a very pretty sight, as it is here that all fruit and vegetables, wholesale as well as retail, are sold, along with seeds, young plants and trees, and all agricultural and horticultural appliances. But one must rise betimes to see it at its best, for in spring and summer the contadini begin to arrive from the country about 4 a.m., their barocci laden with farm

and garden produce, and an hour later the market is in full swing. Fruit can be purchased very cheaply here. One of the most interesting sights of the market is the hundreds of horses and mules, which, still harnessed to their barocci, are left standing for hours quite alone, while their owners are busy attending to their stalls in another part of the square. Wandering about these stalls one can study many of the plainly fashioned, homely appliances used by the Tuscan peasants in their work in field or garden.

Here we see a pile of sickles, exactly similar in shape to those with which the Etruscan husbandman shore down his hay or corn; there is a heap of the roughly-hewn wooden utensils—tubs, pails, etc.—which will be needed at the time of the rendemmiare. Farther on a white-haired countryman is watching over a stack of ladders, such as are used when men prune the olive-trees or carefully gather the ripened fruit in the autumn.

In winter, beside the markets, there are open battola, or cookshops, where food may be bought ready cooked. Even if you have no wish to become a customer it is very fascinating to linger for a time in front of one of these, and

Photo by] [*Brogi*

A TYPICAL TUSCAN CORTILE OR COURTYARD

These courtyards are often very beautiful, being adorned, as this one is, by frescoes and other works of art.

watch the proceedings which are carried on inside.

Away in the background are glowing charcoal furnaces, covered in, like ovens, on top of which stand numberless copper pots and pans, out of which most toothsome odours emanate. At one side is an open fire, overhung by a great wheel which turns a spit on which are impaled not only ducks and fowls, but thrushes and larks as well. In front, on a heated counter, lie piles of eatables of all sorts, from slices of yellow polenta made of maize and oil, and different kinds of chestnut cakes, to multitudinous fritters made of all sorts of ingredients—from veal, sweetbreads, and calves' brains, to the blossoms of vegetable marrows, and frogs' legs.

To breakfast in one's bedroom, where one can partake of the meal in dressing-gown and bedroom slippers, is not conducive to "trigness" of attire, and, to our notions, the mistress of a Florentine house might not represent an ideal picture of tidiness were we to call on her in the early hours of the morning.

But when she goes out to Mass, or, later in the day, to walk in the Boboli Gardens, or drive in the Cascine, all is changed.

The Boboli Gardens, which run up the hill

from the Pitti Palace, are very beautiful, and are also interesting from a botanical point of view, for, being laid out in the quarries from which the stone was taken to build the Pitti Palace and other structures, they are naturally very sheltered, and all sorts of rare and tropical plants grow luxuriantly in them. In fact, they are more or less show gardens, where one walks primly about and admires the plants, or sits gratefully in the shade on hot afternoons.

But the Cascine, or great public park, which stretches for some miles westward along the Arno from the Piazza degli Zuavi, is a more homely place of recreation, and is a joy and boon to every inhabitant of Florence, rich and poor alike. Covering a large extent of ground, once a desolate range of mud banks, which were reclaimed and cultivated by the notorious Alessandro de' Medici, who, in spite of his vicious tastes, had a great love for horticulture, it now resembles a stretch of forest land, most of it being covered with tall, shady trees, intersected by narrow winding paths, while here and there we suddenly come out into delightfully green meadows where cows are browsing, and where anyone can picnic if they will.

There are also two broad carriage drives, one

of which runs through the woods, and is the fashionable rendezvous of Florentine society in summer; while in winter the sunny, sheltered drive by the banks of the Arno is the more popular.

Everyone who can afford to do so drives in the Cascine on Sundays, even if they go on foot all the other days of the week. Indeed, in bygone times it was customary to have a clause inserted in most marriage contracts to the effect that the husband bound himself to provide a carriage, at more or less frequent intervals, in which his wife might drive in the Cascine.

Fashionable young mothers are very frequently to be seen in this park, driving in motors or carriages accompanied by their babies, who are carried on cushions by their "balia," or wet-nurse.

These balias are most imposing personages, for they are women chosen for their strength and fine physique, who come from the country or from the mountains to take charge of the city baby for the first year of its existence. They wear a special dress, which is extremely picturesque and adds to the distinction of their appearance. It consists of a brightly coloured

stuff gown, an embroidered apron and fichu trimmed with lace, and a headdress composed of an enormous bow or ruche of broad ribbon (pink for a girl, blue or scarlet for a boy), with long ends, which hang down to the hem of their skirts behind.

There is a miniature racecourse in the Cascine, where race meetings are held from Easter Monday until the heat grows too oppressive for the sport.

In spring and autumn a game called Pallone, which is a mixture of fives and tennis, and yet unlike both, is played here on large courts by young men in the evening, just as tennis is played at home. The game is played with a leather ball, about half the size of a football, and, instead of racquets, each of the six players has a curious pear-shaped contrivance strapped on his right forearm. With this he strikes the ball. There are three players on each side, with a line, not a net, dividing them from their opponents, and the scoring is by points. A great deal of mild betting on the game goes on among the spectators, who watch it with deep interest.

Photo. by] [*Burton*

A TUSCAN FARMYARD

In harvest time the grain is brought to the farmyard and threshed by engine or flail, and is very often stored in the upper storey of the farmhouse.

CHAPTER VII

FASTS AND FESTIVALS

NEARLY seven hundred years have gone by since the little poor man of Assisi taught the humble peasant folk of Greccio the truths of the Nativity, by turning the corner of the village church into a stable, and presenting before their eyes a realistic representation of the events that took place in Bethlehem on the first Christmas Eve.

It was a happy inspiration, which has borne fruit among the simple Latin races, who, happily for themselves, have not that pride of intellect which refuses to be taught, like little children, by pictures.

For no one can go, as we must certainly go if we are in Florence on Christmas Eve, into some of the dimly lit churches and watch the groups of people—fathers and mothers and little children—stealing forward to gaze with tender reverent eyes at the Presepio, or Crib, which has been erected in a corner near the altar, or in a chapel, without feeling that to them, at least, the representation, grotesque though it

may sometimes be, of the crib and the Holy Child watched over by St. Mary and St. Joseph, and adored by the shepherds while ox and ass look on, is a fitting preparation for the great Festival of the Incarnation.

On Christmas Day everyone who can afford to do so is expected to give a "ceppo," literally a "log," to every waiter, chambermaid, servant or tradesman with whom they have come into close contact. Of course, the expression is synonymous with the English Christmas-box of Boxing Day. The word is interesting as it refers to the great Yule Log, which from the earliest pagan times up to a century or two ago the head of the house was wont to place on the lari, or fire-dogs, on Christmas Eve, and, after having sprinkled it with some wine from the family cup, set on fire in the hope that it would smoulder during the intervening twelve days till the Epiphany.

Epiphany is the children's festival, when Befana visits them in the same way as Santa Claus visits the children of other lands on Christmas Eve. But Befana is not nearly such a lovable person as good St. Nicholas. She is an old woman who is supposed to live in the chimney all the year round except on the Eve

of the Festival of the Three Kings, when she descends from her black hiding-place and visits the bedsides of the children when they are fast asleep. If they have been good during the year she fills their stockings with toys, if naughty, they are rewarded with a mere handful of toys and a tiny birch-broom.

It naturally follows that Befana is dreaded rather than loved in Florentine nurseries, for the children are threatened with her displeasure whenever they are disobedient or troublesome. And as it is supposed the noise of trumpets and bells will frighten her away, the children go to the numerous street stalls, which are erected everywhere between Christmas and Epiphany, and spend their soldi on the whistles, horns, and tiny clay bells which are to be found there, and return home happy, feeling that they can bid defiance to the black-faced bogey; while their parents haunt the same stalls in search of cheap toys with which to fill the little stockings.

On St. Antonio's Day (January 17) the cabmen send little flat loaves of bread, (pane di St. Antonio) to their patrons and patronesses, and some of them take their horses to church to be blessed.

From Christmas to Shrove Tuesday is a time

of festivity, when rich and poor alike indulge in gaieties of various kinds, but when Lent begins all entertainments stop, and the only recreation for the next six weeks is on Sundays, at the nut fairs. These fairs are quite a feature of the penitential season, and in bygone years were inaugurated by a fair held early on Ash Wednesday morning under the Loggia of S. Paolino, in the Piazza S. Maria Novella, at which all kinds of dried fruits and cereals were sold, the idea being that on that morning thrifty housewives were eager to lay in a stock of figs, olives, raisins, etc., to vary the Lenten fare.

But this fair has been discontinued, and such purchases must be made in ordinary shops or at the nut fairs, which are held on Sundays at different gates of the city.

These nut fairs form a great meeting-place for the members of the artisan classes and the peasants from the surrounding districts. So much so, that they are regarded as affording the most favourable opportunities which the lads and lasses have of commencing their courtships and bringing them to a happy conclusion.

The first three fairs, which are known respectively as the Fiera dei Curiosi (the Fair of the Curious), the Fiera dei Furiosi (the Fair of the

Photo.] *[McLellan*

THE ASCENT TO FIESOLE

From the hill of Fiesole a magnificent view is obtained of the Valley of the Arno, and the hills beyond.

Furious), and the Fiera degl' Innamorati (the Fair of the Lovers), are held in the Piazza San Gallo, just beside the ancient gateway of that name.

The fourth fair, which falls on Mid-Lent Sunday, has no special appellation, and is held at the Porta del Prato. The fifth fair, the Fiera dei Contratti, takes place at the Porta Romana and is the most important of all, as any marriages which have been arranged are announced there, the marriage contracts settled, and congratulations received.

The sixth fair is known as the Fair of the Rejected, the idea being, perhaps, that those who have not had the good fortune to appear under the guise of betrothed persons on the previous Sunday may at this last festal gathering have another chance. It is held at the Porto S. Frediano.

At all these fairs nuts and almonds are the principal commodities offered for sale on the gaily draped stalls. But other things are sold as well: dried fruits and little cakes, which, owing to the Lenten season, are baked entirely without butter.

Chief among those are Maritozzi, or Roman buns, cheap brown biscuits called Quaresimali,

and another variety of biscuits, brigiddisi, which are strongly flavoured with aniseed, and which are baked on the spot in little portable ovens.

In Mid-Lent comes the Day of Scala, when children with clever fingers cut little ladders out of cardboard or soft perforated paper, then run out into the streets to play pranks on unwary passers-by. They carefully whiten one side of a cardboard ladder with chalk, then stamp its impress on the black coat of some respectable citizen and pin a fluttering paper ladder to a lady's skirt. Then they dart off with the mocking cry "L'ha, l'ha," (You've got it, you've got it), only to repeat the trick at the corner of the next street.

From the point of view of ecclesiastical customs, Holy Week and Easter are the most interesting of all the year to spend in Florence.

A great many of these customs prevail in other parts of Italy, as they are the ordinary ceremonies connected with the ritual of the Roman Church. But one, the Scoppio del Carro, which takes place on Easter Even is unique, being purely local, and people from all parts of the world try, if they are anywhere in the neighbourhood, to be in Florence on that day in order to witness it.

Preparations for the Easter Festival begin in Passion Week, or even in the week preceding it. For if at that time we are visiting any house in the city, large or small, rich or poor, we would be liable to stumble on a spring-cleaning.

The reason for this being, not so much the season of the year, as the fact that in Passion Week every parish priest visits not only every house in his parish, but every room in that house, blessing it and sprinkling it with Holy Water. This is known as the Blessing of the Houses, and naturally every housewife wishes to have her domestic domain in apple-pie order for the occasion.

Towards the end of Passion Week we see numbers of barocci entering the town, laden, not with their usual load of wine and flagons, but with branches of silvery olives. These, together with quantities of palms, are taken into the Duomo, or the Church of the Santissima Annunziata, in the Piazza of that name, and piled up in front of the altar. On Palm Sunday morning, before Mass, they are blessed by the celebrating priest, and distributed to the other clergy and to the members of the congregation. When this part of the service is over an imposing procession takes place. All the

clergy, with olive-branches in their hands, rise from their seats in the choir, and move slowly down the church; while the accounts of our Lord's entry into Jerusalem from the various gospels are sung by the choir. The procession does not halt at the west door, but proceeds straight out of church into the porch, and the door is closed behind it. Then the choir sing the Palm Sunday hymn, "All glory, laud, and honour," while the clergy reply with the refrain outside. When the hymn is finished the doors are once more opened, and the gorgeously vested priests move slowly back to their places.

Of course there are a great many more palms and olives blessed than are distributed in church, and those that are over are sold on the steps; for everyone likes to have an olive benedetto stuck up in his house, or barn, or stable, to protect it from evil influences throughout the coming year.

Another and more mundane preparation is to be found in the Fiera di Cavalli e Bovini, or cattle show, which is held in the market outside the barrier of San Jacopo on the Wednesday in Holy Week, when cattle which have been fattened for the Easter Feast, just as they are fattened for Christmas in England, are exposed for sale.

Photo by] [*Burton*

VINTAGERS

Whole families turn out to gather the grapes, making the vintage quite a festive season.

On the afternoon of that day the first of the solemn services of the Passion is held. This is the Mattutino delle Tenebre, and it consists of the Matins and Lauds proper to Maundy Thursday, which are said on the previous day, and are spoken of as the Matins of Darkness because of the tradition that the early Christians were in the habit of holding offices of prayer in the Catacombs at dead of night.

This service lasts for three hours, and is most impressive. During the singing of the *Benedictus,* the altar lights are extinguished one by one until only one, which represents Christ, remains, and that is removed from the altar and hidden behind it in order to typify our Lord's death and burial. When, in this way, the church has been rendered utterly dark and gloomy, the clergy and congregation beat the floor with slender rods of willow, which can be bought outside, thus producing the noise known as the "strepitacula," which is supposed to represent the upheaval of natural forces at the final hour of the crucifixion. Afterwards, the one tiny light is restored to the altar, and the worshippers disperse in reverent silence.

During Mass on Holy Thursday all the bells of the churches ring out in a sudden burst of

sound, then all is quiet and no bell is heard again in the city until two days later, when they commence to ring at midday on Easter Even.

During the celebration of the Maundy Thursday Mass in the Cathedral, the ceremony takes place of the Blessing of the Holy Oils. The three oils—the oil of the sick, used in Extreme Unction; the oil of catechumens, used in Baptism, Confirmation, and Ordination; and the oil of chrism, which is a mixture of oil and balsam, and is used in the consecration of Bishops and in other ceremonies—are placed in front of the Archbishop in three *ampullæ*, or jars. That dignitary, assisted by twelve priests and seven deacons, representing the twelve Apostles and seven Deacons of the Early Church, reads prayers of exorcism and blessing over the oils, which are then set apart for sacred purposes.

In the afternoon the whole city is astir. For, as has been the custom in Italy from mediæval times, Sepulturi, or Sepulchres, are formed in the principal churches on Maundy Thursday, and all good Catholics consider it a duty to visit seven of them—to make the "visita delle chiese," as it is called.

Each Sepulchre represents a flower-decked

tomb in a garden, in the middle of which the Host is placed, surrounded by lights and the Emblems of the Passion. A certain kind of silvery grass, known as vecchia, is largely used in the decoration of these gardens, and, as we look at its strange white colour, we wonder what species of plant it is, and where it comes from.

The fact is that it is grown for the purpose in dark vaults or cellars where no light can enter, and in this way it acquires this strangely bleached hue.

In some churches we also find the figure of the dead Christ, exposed so that the faithful may pray and meditate beside it; and it is a pretty sight to see little children, some of them so young that they can hardly toddle, coming with their mothers, or elder brothers and sisters, to kiss the wounds, and then kneel down and say their baby prayers.

Another interesting ceremony goes on in several of the churches on this busy afternoon. This is the Lavanda, or Washing of the Feet, in commemoration of that first feet-washing which took place in the upper room at Jerusalem. If we would see the ceremony at its best, we will take up our places in the Duomo in good time, for the service begins at

half-past three, and, as it is conducted within the marble choir, every spot in the church where anything can be seen is very quickly occupied.

It is desirable to secure a position on the south side of the altar, if possible, as the proceedings can be seen best from that side of the choir. As it is somewhat difficult to see into the choir at all, most of the onlookers stand on chairs, which can be rented for a few soldi; and even from this coign of vantage we may count ourselves fortunate if we catch a glimpse of the thirteen old men, each one of whom represents an Apostle (including St. Matthias), who are sitting in state on a platform, clothed in loose white gowns, and glorying in the brand-new boots and socks which they have just donned in the Archbishop's palace which adjoins the cathedral.

Presently the Archbishop walks in, gorgeous in cope and mitre, and attended by a group of clergy. He seats himself in his episcopal chair, under its canopy of purple, while a sermon is preached, during which the onlookers get down from their perches and rest.

When the oration is finished, the rush of movement is once more heard, for everyone jumps upon his chair again. Each of the old

Photo by [*McLellan*

THE CERTOSA MONASTERY NEAR FLORENCE

This Monastery is inhabited by Carthusian monks, and visitors are allowed to inspect it.

men uncovers a foot. Then the Archbishop and his assistants move slowly across the platform. One priest carries a silver basin, another a ewer, and a third a napkin.

Each foot is in turn held over the basin, the Archiepiscopal fingers sprinkle it with water from the ewer, the third priest dries it with the napkin, and so the ceremony wears to a close. Besides the new boots and socks, each of the old men receives a loaf of bread and a piece of money, so we can well imagine that they go home quite satisfied with the part they have been called on to play.

The services on Good Friday morning are entirely devotional, but in the afternoon we can, if we will, see the miraculous crucifix of San Gualberto uncovered at St. Trinità. To this crucifix an interesting story is attached. It is said that on the evening of Good Friday, A.D. 1003, Giovanni Gualberto, second son of the Lord of Petraia, was riding up the hill of San Miniato with an aching and passionate heart which was burning to avenge the death of his elder brother, whom he dearly loved, and who had recently been murdered. On the way, he met the perpetrator of the foul deed, and would fain have killed him. But the wretched man

fell on his knees and begged for mercy in the name of Him who on that day died for His enemies.

The young Count, being a Christian man, could not refuse the plea, and passed on, leaving him unhurt. But feeling rather restless and unhappy, he entered the church of San Miniato, where the crucifix of which we speak hung. He knelt before it in prayer, and lo! to his awe and astonishment, the figure bowed its head towards him in approval.

Gualberta was so impressed by what he took to be a direct message from God that he left the world, and eventually founded the Order of the Reformed Benedictines on the heights of Vallombrosa.

The miraculous crucifix remained in the Church of San Miniato for six hundred years. Then, in A.D. 1671, it was removed to Santa Trinità, where it hangs concealed in the Chapel of San Paolo—except on Good Friday afternoons, and other rare occasions, when it is exposed to the gaze of the faithful.

If one has enough energy left after viewing the various religious ceremonies of the day in Florence, it is worth while, in the evening, to take a tram from the Piazza del Duomo

and go out to the little village of Grassina which lies in a country valley about six mile distant.

For it is here that the famous procession of Gesù Morto, or the Dead Redeemer, is held year by year, as Good Friday comes round.

When we reach the village we by no means find ourselves in an atmosphere of peace. For a fair has been held in the afternoon, and the tiny piazza is still crowded with stalls, while vehicles of all kinds keep pouring in from Florence and the surrounding districts.

But upon the hillsides all is quiet, and, as the clock strikes seven, a picturesque, and yet, in a way, solemn procession leaves a little church standing high up among the vineyards, and, lit on its way by torches, winds down the slope towards where we stand.

First come Roman soldiers on horseback, wearing imitation armour and long cloaks, then come baby angels and slim young girls dressed in white, carrying lighted tapers.

Following them walk a company of married women, clad in deepest mourning, and veiled in black. Then appears a statue of the Mater Dolorosa, borne on the shoulders of sturdy contadini. Behind it walk the parish priests,

accompanied by various guilds of men, and the village choir, chanting the *Miserere* in mournful strains.

A huge black canopy next appears in view, borne unsteadily by a dozen countrymen. As it passes, every head is uncovered, every knee bent; for under it, on a bier, carried shoulder high, is the figure of the dead Christ, with its pallid face and gaping wounds. Other companies of men, mourning matrons, and singing boys, follow, and, last of all, the village band brings up the rear.

All those who take part in this procession are simple peasant folk, and the details of it may seem crude and even tawdry to the critical outsider; but with the Easter moon shining down on us, and the soft grey shimmer of olive leaves surrounding us on every side, a certain atmosphere is created, which makes it easier to throw one's thoughts back to a tomb in the garden of Joseph of Arimathea, where "never man had yet lain."

One needs must be early astir on Easter Even if one would witness the most interesting festa of the whole year—that of the Scoppio del Carro. This ceremony is closely connected with the usual "Blessing of the New Fire,"

Photo by] [*Dante*

OXEN AT THE PLOUGH

These Val de' Chiana oxen are the old breed of Roman cattle—the "milk-white steers" of history.

which takes place in all Roman Catholic churches on that day.

As we saw, all the lights were extinguished on Wednesday, during the Mattutino delle Tenebre, and they are relit on Easter Even.

In Florence the light is obtained from a spark struck on a very precious flint stone in the ancient Church of the Santissimi Apostoli. This flint stone or rather stones—for there are three—has a very curious history. It was brought, with its companions, from the Holy Sepulchre by a member of the Paizzi family in the time of the Third Crusade, and, ever since, the Easter fire has been lit by it.

When the tinder among which the spark falls has kindled, a candle is lit at the flame, and placed in a portafuoco, or lantern, which is carried in procession on the end of a long pole to the Duomo, accompanied by municipal guards, flag-bearers, and officers of the Commune, clad in a quaint costume of red and white hose and jerkins.

This procession passes through the streets shortly after 8 a.m., and is often interrupted as one after another begs permission to light candles, to be burned at their own private shrines, from that in the portafuoco.

At last it reaches the Duomo, where it is met by the clergy of the cathedral. Then the great paschal candle, which stands on the Gospel side of the altar, is lit from the flame, as well as the other lights.

Soon afterwards an enormous four-storied car, known as the "Caroccio," drawn by a quartette of magnificent white oxen, with gilded horns and hoofs, and splendid trappings of scarlet, appears in the piazza, and takes up its position in front of the Duomo. This car is literally bristling with fireworks. The oxen are unyoked and led away, and soon the pompieri, or firemen, who are in charge, are busy fixing a wire between the Caroccio and a stand which is erected near the altar of the great church, the western doors of which are thrown wide open.

Meanwhile, the piazza is thronged with people, many of whom have come from the adjoining villages, and wait eagerly for the omen which is to tell them what kind of harvest they may look forward to.

At half-past eleven the Archbishop celebrates Mass, and as twelve o'clock strikes the *Gloria in Excelsis* is chanted by the choir. Instantly all the bells of the city ring out,

and, as if frightened by the clamour, an artificial "columbina," or dove, flies along the wire, and touches the car; then returns to its refuge in the cathedral. At its touch the fireworks explode, for it carries a lighted fuse in its bosom.

The fireworks are superb, and the noise is deafening, but to the countryfolk, at least, the principal thing to be observed is how the columbina conducts herself. If her flight is straight, the year's harvest will be an ample one; if she wobbles, the prospects are poor.

If Easter morning in Florence is fine, nothing can be more beautiful. Everything speaks of joy and gladness—the tender green of the trees, and the delicate tints of the spring flowers which meet us at every corner; the merry chiming of the church bells, and the triumphant pealing of the organs, which ring out through the open doors of the churches; the joyous laughter of little children, heard over garden walls, as they search in the bushes for Easter eggs, fishes, and chickens, which they know they will find there; while, in the general gladness, the dome of the cathedral seems to be rosier than usual, and its walls whiter, and Giotto's Tower seems to greet us with a blessing of peace as it meets

us "like the Angel of the Resurrection waiting to announce the risen Lord."

On Ascension Day a very popular festa is held in the Cascine. This is the Giorno dei Grilli, or Day of the Crickets.

As a rule the weather is delightful, and everyone gets up very early and goes out into the park, where the primary business is to catch one of the grilli, or black field crickets, that hop about among the long grass. This feat having been accomplished, and the little creature enclosed in one of the tiny cages formed of buckwheat straw which are sold in hundreds on the spot, the rest of the forenoon is whiled pleasantly away in the green, park-like spaces, or under the shade of the trees.

Then comes merenda, or luncheon, which is taken alfresco either at one of the numerous little open-air restaurants, or, if the family party have brought their own provisions, sitting at ease on the ground.

After lunch everyone flocks back to the town, carrying their grilli with them, to be taken home or given as a present to some favoured friend.

No matter where its destination may be, the subsequent movements of the grilla are watched

Photo by] [*Burton*

A BAROCCIO OF WINE ON THE PONTE ALLE GRAZIE

Note the triangular support under the cart, the sheet to protect the mule from the sun, the high saddle, and the bells on the harness.

with intense interest; for, in Etruscan and Grecian times, the little creature was regarded as a type of human life, and certain superstitions linger round it even to the present day.

If it chirps loudly as it is carried over the threshold of its new abode, good luck will pursue the inhabitants during the coming year. If it lives and thrives in captivity, which it very rarely does, their lives will be long, and vice versâ. It is considered a portent of great happiness if a grilla caught on Ascension Day survives till Corpus Christi.

Another children's festa, which, however, is dying out, is the Fierucolne, or Feast of the Lanterns, which falls on the 7th of September. At this festa the children in the poorer parts of the city run about after dark with little lanterns made of coloured paper stretched on canes, and fashioned to represent some familiar object, such as a boat, a globe, a fish, or a bell.

The last feast of the ecclesiastical year is the Feast of All Saints which, on the morrow, merges into that of All Souls. All Saints is a great festival. All the shops are shut, all the bells rung, and everyone turns out in their best attire to do honour to their dead.

After Mass, which takes place very early in

the morning, all the inhabitants of the city, men, women, and little children, throng across the bridges and up the narrow pathway known as the Via Crucis, which leads through the olives to the church and churchyard of San Miniato, which is the great necropolis of Florence.

Everyone carries flowers, in one form or another, from the most elaborate wreaths and crosses to the simple posies held in baby hands; for the Roman Church has never relinquished the ancient belief in the Communion of saints. Therefore, to her children, the Day of the Dead is no gloomy commemoration, but a joyous festival, when heaven and earth come very near together, and living and departed rejoice in one common hope.

So the graves must be wreathed in flowers, and candles lit upon them, which glimmer pale and shadowy in the sunlight, but which glow brighter and brighter as daylight declines, and shine out with steady light when the short day has ended and darkness has fallen.

CHAPTER VIII

ENVIRONMENTS

NEXT in interest to the city of Florence itself is the little sister city of Fiesole, standing on its hill about two miles to the northward. The appellation "city" sits strangely upon it, for, splendid as it may have been in olden times, it is a mere village to-day, although it still possesses a cathedral and a Bishop of its own.

One can reach it by tramcar from the Duomo, or by hired carriage, but either of these methods entails a long, dusty drive, as the public road winds in rather a tedious manner up the hillside; and it is much more direct, and also a hundred times more interesting, to climb to Fiesole on foot, through the narrow lanes and up the steep, rocky paths which have been trodden before us by bishops and monks, and fierce Medici warriors whose names stand out among those of the makers of Florence.

We can, if we will, take the tram from the Duomo to the Porta S. Gallo, then, alighting,

take the second road to the right, and follow the course of the Mugnone until we come to the walls which surround the garden of the villa Palmieri. It was within these walls that Boccaccio's seven maidens with their swains took refuge during a visitation of plague in 1348, and spent their time telling stories and listening to the songs of the nightingales. It was here also that Queen Victoria, of pious memory, spent some happy weeks in the spring of 1888.

After passing the walls of this villa we reach the convent of San Domenico di Fiesole, where Guido da Vicchio, better known as Fra Angelico, and his brother Benedetto, who afterwards became Pope of Rome, served their noviciate and became Dominican Friars.

The church has been despoiled, but two frescoes of Fra Angelico's still remain; a triptych (a Madonna and Saints) in the choir, and a Crucifixion in the Sacristy.

If we will, we can branch off the road here and visit the Badia di Fiesole, which we see marked out by its campanile, on the left. Both convent and church are very beautiful, and the place is haunted by memories of Bishop Romolo, first Bishop of Fiesole, who is said to have been sent here in A.D. 60 by the Apostle Peter him-

Photo by] [*Burton*

BAROCCI

Laden with brushwood and flagons of wine.

self. Also of two Irish saints, Donato and Andrew, who set out in the ninth century to make a pilgrimage to Italy to "visit the holy places," and were so charmed with the beauty of this hill that they entered the convent, and spent the remainder of their lives here.

From the Dominican monastery the path ascends straight up the slope, growing ever steeper and steeper. But we hardly notice the difficulty of the way as we feast our eyes on the wonderful panorama spread out beneath us, ever growing wider and more far-reaching the higher we ascend; or gaze at the extraordinary wealth of colouring which meets us at every turn; for the hill of Fiesole, especially in spring-time, is a veritable paradise of flowers.

Indeed, no one who has wandered along its byways at this season, and passed through fields ablaze with tulips and anemones, narcissi and irises, violets and periwinkles, while overhead almond and peach and apricot blossom, in all the loveliness of their delicate tints, stand out against the sky, can doubt as to where Fra Angelico learned to choose the colours for the robes of his Heavenly Hosts.

Higher up still we pass the Villa Medici, hidden in gardens and shut in by ancient

cypresses, and the convent of San Girolamo, reached by a flight of moss-grown stone steps which are also guarded by cypresses. This convent is now occupied by Irish nuns—"The Little Company of Mary." These sisters are more commonly known as the "Blue Nuns," from the blue veils which form part of their dress. They are a nursing order, and, besides taking cases in Florence and elsewhere, they receive convalescent patients into the convent.

A little farther on we reach the Piazza round which the village of Fiesole centres. It is somewhat dusty and windswept, and as it serves both as a car terminus and a cabstand we are at once beset by cabmen who wish to drive us back to Florence, by boys who flourish postcards in our faces, and by little girls who offer us sweet-smelling posies with the most enticing of smiles. There are also plenty of loitering beggars, who press forward with eager requests to be allowed to guide us to the Roman theatre.

We will be wise if we shake off all those importunate folk, with the exception, perhaps, of the little flower-girls; for the postcards are poor, and we can explore Fiesole to better advantage alone.

The Piazza occupies what was probably the

site of the Etruscan Forum. Facing us as we stand with our backs to the path up which we have climbed is the cathedral; to the left is a Franciscan monastery and the little church of S. Alessandro, standing where in Etruscan days stood a temple dedicated to Bacchus, or the Etruscan equivalent to Bacchus.

Behind us, down a narrow lane, are some very well preserved remains of a Roman theatre and baths, and the fragments of a temple. These ruins lie basking in the sun on the slope of the hill on the other side from Florence, and little active green lizards creep out and in among the old stones.

Traces of the ancient Etruscan wall can also be seen here, showing how these old builders did their work, simply placing one enormous block of stone on top of another.

The cathedral is interesting as being the burial-place of S. Donatus, and containing the tomb of Bishop Salutati, which is considered the masterpiece of the sculptor Mino da Fiesole.

But it is not in the cathedral that one feels inclined to linger, but up on the crest of the hill which rises to the west of the Piazza, which is reached by a steep, narrow lane, haunted by beggars and snarling, uncared-for dogs.

At the top of this lane there is a little plateau which boasts a couple of seats and is protected by a low stone wall.

From this point of vantage the most wonderful view is obtained. Beneath us to the left lies Florence, with her domes and spires, seen through a delicate tracery of fruit-trees. Opposite is S. Miniato—that "Hill of Gardens" up which the inhabitants of the city are carried when the time comes for them to sleep their long sleep.

To the south and west wind the valleys of the Arno and Mugnone: the former bounded, in the distance, by range after range of hills, clinging to the sides of which tiny little white-walled cittàs are to be seen. While against the far horizon rise the peaks of the Apennines, and the mountains behind which lie the valley of the Tiber, and Rome.

If we would catch some glimpses of real Tuscan peasant life we have only to dip over the crest of the hill, and turn our faces in the direction of the outlying villages of Settignano and Maiano. If we do so we will find plenty to interest us in watching the swarthy contadini tilling their little plots of ground or ploughing between the rows of vines or olives with their teams of patient oxen, in the goatherds tending

Photograph [illegible] *Dante*

A WELL IN THE COURTYARD OF THE CHURCH OF FOGNA

For hundreds of years the Tuscan women must have drawn their water from such wells.

their goats, and in the bright-eyed, dark-haired girls who take their part so readily in all kinds of outside work.

No one who visits the country round about Florence in early summer can fail to be struck by the large stretches of ground covered with irises, which are grown in the vicinity in large numbers, wrapping parts of the hillsides in a perfect glory of purple and mauve.

This stately flower, besides being indigenous to the soil, is specially cultivated by farmers and peasant proprietors, not only for the sale of its blossoms, but in order that its roots may be sold to form the principal ingredient of the fragrant orris-root perfumes for which the city is famous. These perfumes are manufactured and sold in the ancient farmacia of Santa Maria Novella.

The peasants attend to their little crops of irises in their spare time—the girls rising early in the bright summer mornings to cut the blossoms before the strength of the sun has withered them, and carry them down to the city in sheaves to sell them at street corners or in the Mercato Nuovo. Afterwards, when the roots come to be lifted, they are peeled and dried at odd moments.

But on a large podere, or farm, the digging of the iris roots is like any other harvest: a time when everyone is busy, and when outside help is wanted.

It takes place in July, when the flowering season is over. Then the plants are dug up and the largest roots laid aside for peeling, while the small tubers which have been thrown out are cut off and replanted, to grow into mature roots in two years' time.

Every morning a quantity of roots are dug up in this way and carried to the farm buildings to be weighed. They are then handed over to bands of women and girls who have been engaged for the purpose, and who settle themselves in some outhouse, or in some shady spot in the open air, and peel and chatter and chatter and peel all through the livelong day. In the evening the peeled roots are spread out on stoie, or mats, and carried to some safe place; and then they are left until they have shrivelled up and are hard as wood.

Then they are taken to the city, where in the different manufactories they are ground to powder, which finds its way as "Florence orris-root" to shops all over the world.

It is August before the ingathering of the

iris crop is over; in September comes the vendemmiare, or vintage.

This is a time of great rejoicing and constant picnicking; for the grapes are gathered on different estates on different days, so that all the neighbours may have their due share in the festivities, first at one podere, then at another.

Invitations to take part in the vendemmiare having been sent out by the fattore, or bailiff, the recipients flock to the vineyard in the early morning—men and women and children; for even tiny fingers can help to gather grapes.

Everyone carries a basket made of pleated osiers, and the older folk have provided themselves with sharp knives.

Vines in Tuscany are, as a rule, allowed to grow very luxuriantly, being trained in loose festoons over mulberry-trees which are planted for the purpose in regular rows up and down the hillsides.

Soon everyone is busy: the grown-ups cutting the luscious bunches from the vines, the children picking up the unblemished grapes which have fallen on the ground, eating as many as they can; meanwhile, when the baskets are filled, they are emptied into wooden casks which have been placed at intervals in the field, and these in their

turn are placed on waggons which are drawn by docile oxen to the aja, or great stone shed, where the wine vats are to be found.

The grapes are passed through a machine which slices them down, then the juicy mass is thrown into a vat, and in the evening, when work in the fields is finished, stalwart contadini come, bare to the knees, and "tread the grapes," singing lustily in chorus meanwhile.

Fermentation and other processes follow, and when the wine is ready for use it is sold in casks, or in the quaint, long-necked, straw-covered flasks which we have seen brought to the city in such large quantities.

When, as often happens on large estates, the vendemmiare lasts for several days, a supper is given on the last evening by the padrone, or master, to all who have taken part—gentle and simple alike. For family friends as well as humbler neighbours make a point of lending their aid. After the supper is ended dancing is carried on merrily by moonlight or starlight in the open air.

The olive crop is of as much or even more importance than the vintage. For Italy makes a great boast of her olive oil, which is perhaps the purest in the world.

Photo by] [*McLellan*

A GOATHERD OF FLORENCE

In the vineyard in the background the vines are trained on mulberry trees.

The olive-trees are not left to grow in wild luxuriance like the vines, but are carefully pruned and cut back in the spring.

Then they are left to themselves all summer while the husbandman ploughs the strips of red earth that run between their ordered ranks, and sows and reaps his crop of maize or millet or melons.

In the late autumn he begins to take more heed to the olives, which by then are beginning to change colour; or rather, he takes anxious heed to the weather, for if a storm should arise, and the fruit be battered about or blown to the ground, a great part of his profit would be gone, as the best quality of oil cannot be obtained from bruised and damaged olives.

The picking of the fruit, which begins at the end of November and goes on all through December, entails a great amount of labour, as each olive is taken separately from its branch by men and women who stand on ladders to do so.

When it is picked the fruit is carried to the frantojo, or oil-pressing room, where it is thrown into an enormous stone basin and crushed, kernels and all, by a wheel which is attached to a pole projecting from a pillar in the centre, and is worked by a docile ox, which

plods patiently round and round outside the basin on a track of dried leaves and ferns.

When the olives have been sufficiently bruised the oily pulp is lifted out with wooden shovels and put into a winepress, which, on small farms at least, is worked by the peasants themselves, who form a very picturesque picture, as, in their scanty garments and bright-coloured sashes they throw all their weight on the beam of wood by which the screw is turned.

The finest quality of oil is that which trickles out first, and it seems as if there were some truth in the assertion that the Italians keep this to themselves: for it is certainly not like that we buy in England, being practically colourless and absolutely tasteless.

In former years a very fitting custom obtained in the neighbourhood of Florence. Two small barrels of oil were entrusted to the care of the representatives of some special church or brotherhood—it might be the Franciscans of Fiesole this year, the Brothers of S. Miniato next—in order that they might be offered as a thanks-offering for the olive harvest at the altar of the Church of the Santissima Annunziata.

The Brethren who chanced to have the honour to be elected conveyed the barrels to the church slung on either side of a mule,

which was ridden by a tiny boy dressed as an angel.

A similar custom prevails to-day at the village of Signa, which is situated some seven miles from Florence, where on Easter Monday the festival of the local saint is held—the saint being a little shepherdess, Beata Giovanna, who, in the thirteenth century, left her sheep to follow a life of stricter devotion in a tiny cell on the hillside.

On her festival all the daughter churches which are dependent on the parish church of Signa send an offering of oil to supply the lamps of the Blessed Giovanna's shrine; and each offering is brought by a tiny boy or girl angel, who heads his or her village procession seated on a donkey. Each procession is met at the door of the church by the parish priest of Signa, and the proud little angel is allowed to ride up the central aisle to the altar, where it deposits its offering, afterwards retiring by a side aisle, thus making room for the next comer.

About two and a half miles from Florence, overlooking the Val d'Ema, stands the picturesque Carthusian monastery, now rapidly approaching dissolution, which is generally spoken of simply as "the Certosa." We reach it by the road which passes through the Porte Romana and

leads to the little village of St. Galuzzo, where the entire female population seems engaged, in autumn at least, in plaiting straw.

From this tiny hamlet the road winds through pleasant, undulating country, thickly studded with cottages, farmhouses, and villas; and one is tempted to linger by the wayside and watch the peasants, who are always busy in their plots of ground: hoeing the soil, pruning the trees, cutting their little patches of hay or wheat, ploughing their tiny vineyards or watering them by hand with water which we can watch being drawn in bucketfuls from a moss-grown well by a docile, mild-eyed ox.

The Certosa, which stands like a massive fortress on the top of the hill Montaguto, is reached by a steep narrow lane bordered by low walls on which drowsy green lizards lie basking in the sun.

The gate is opened by an ancient, rosy-cheeked porter-monk, clad all in white, with smooth, shaved head, and a beard which matches his habit. Another Brother, a facsimile of the first, shows us over the monastery, which is a veritable "habitation of peace," with its clusters of cells built round a square cloister, now used as a garden, orchard, and burial-ground.

Photo by] [*Dante*

A COUNTRY ROAD LEADING TO FLORENCE

Cypresses abound round Florence, especially on the hillside by which one ascends to San Miniato.

In early summer this garden is a dream of fragrance and beauty, being full of sweet-smelling herbs and flowers. For the ancient Brethren of the Certosa support themselves by the sale of home-made liqueur, perfumes, tonics, and febrifuges.

So the flower-beds which are laid out round the quaint canopied well in the centre of the cloister are fragrant with lavender, roses, carnations, verbenas, jasmines, oranges, lemons, thyme, sage, and all manner of aromatic herbs.

The Certosa was built in the fourteenth century with a view to educating students for the priesthood—to form a college, in fact. But this design was never carried out, and now it is the house of a handful of aged, weather-beaten, cheerful gardener-monks, who live under a strict rule of silence, and only eat together on Sundays and holy days. Their numbers are gradually diminishing, however, as one after another is laid to rest among the flowers and the bees in the garden cloister. No fresh inmates are admitted, so when the last Brother is carried out, and the last grave filled up, the ancient order of things will have passed away, and the old monastery will be turned to other uses.

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